JIU JITSU STYLE

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MIYAO BROS

MIKEY MUSUMECI

NOGI WITH OLI GEDDES

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EDWIN NAJMI

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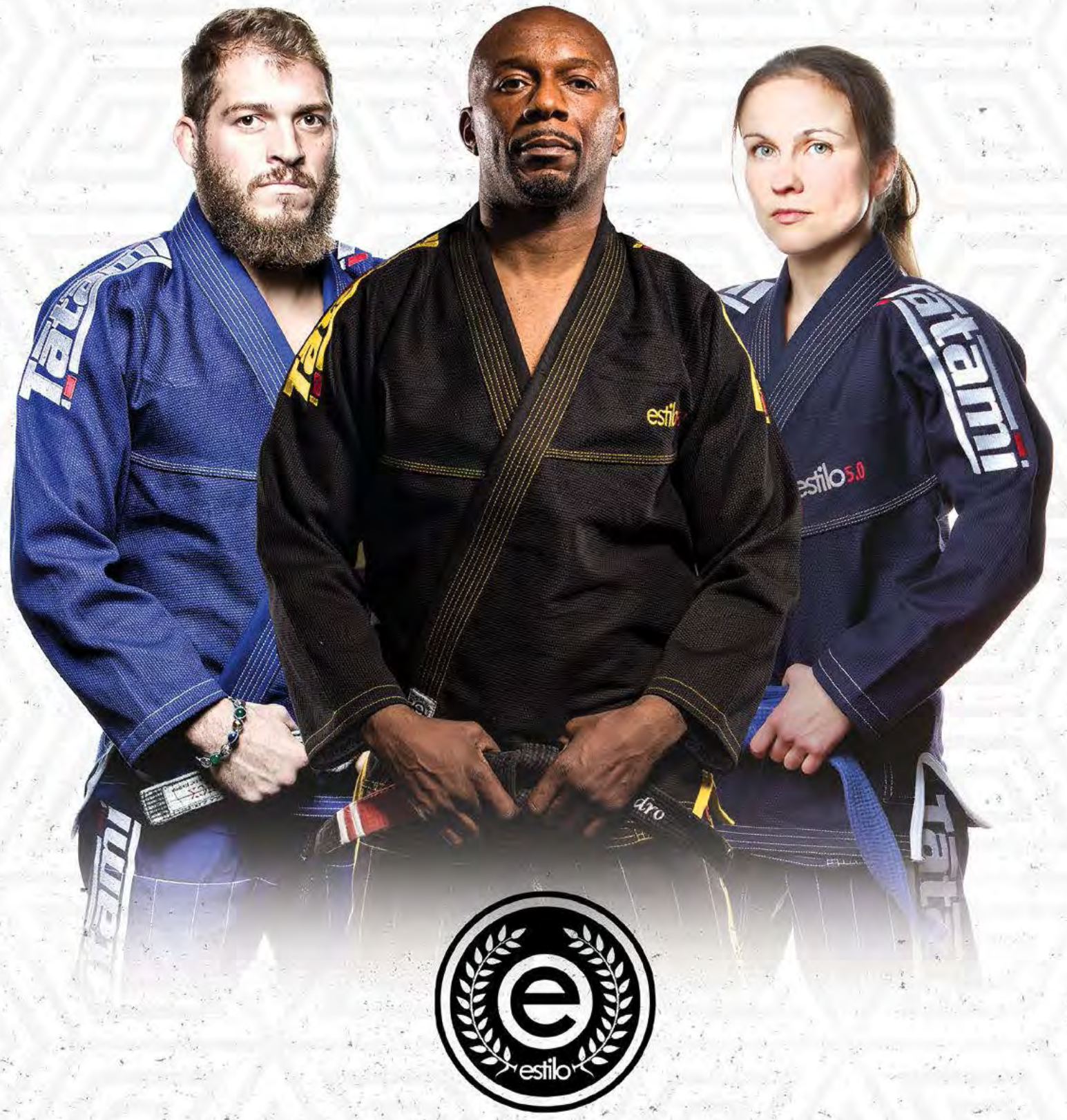

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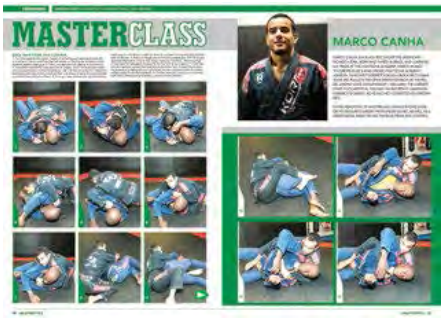

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"IF YOU WANT TO MAKE A LIVING THROUGH JIU-JITSU BE ORGANISED BE PROFESSIONAL BE POSITIVE BE FOCUSED BE MATURE BE ENERGETIC BE THE DIFFERENCE"
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RAFA X FIVE
COVER STORY

30 RAFAEL MENDES
Rafa times five

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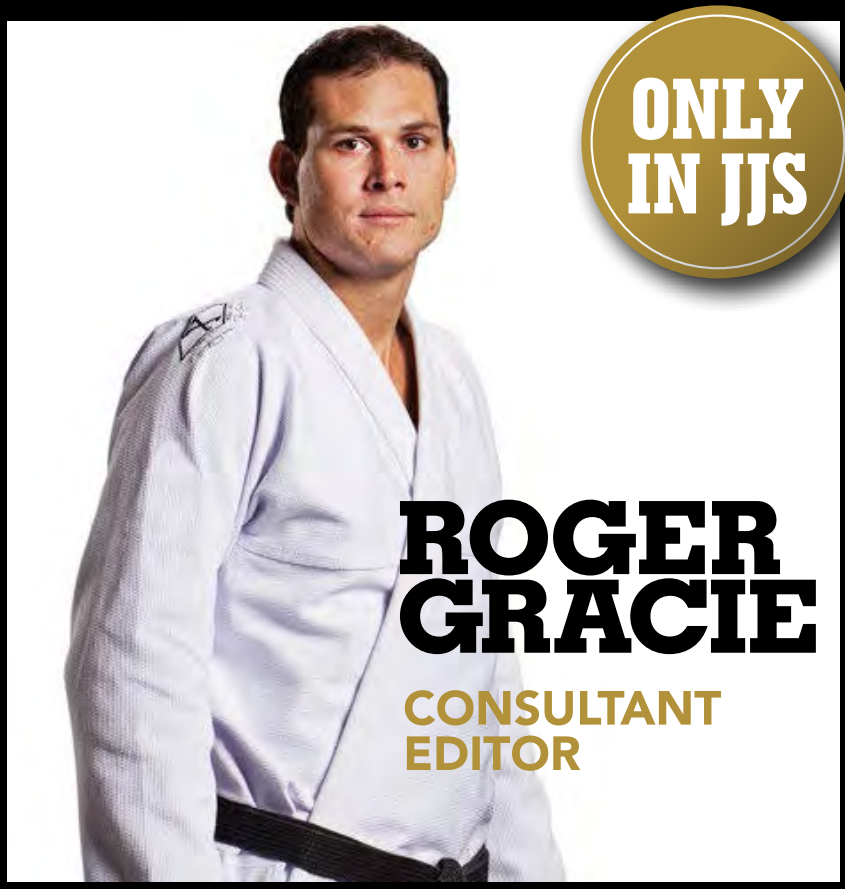


As usual, it's been a very busy summer for me, but I have really enjoyed travelling and teaching seminars across the US. Teaching seminars is always a great way to meet new people, share knowledge and have some fun!

It was also fantastic to see such a great turnout for my jiu jitsu camp in Malaga, Spain. My student, Pablo Cabo, has worked really hard to grow jiu jitsu from his impressive academy, and we all had a great time training and enjoying the surroundings. The camp this year was extra special as my father, Mauricio, was also in attendance.

As well as attending our summer camp, my father has been spending time with us in London. I know my students always appreciate it when he's back teaching at the academy – they probably prefer him teaching instead of me!

We've got another awesome cover feature for you guys in this issue with arguably one of the best fighters of the modern generation. Rafa Mendes has now surpassed my uncle, Royler Gracie, in becoming a five time World Champion, making him the most decorated jiu jitsu featherweight.

Though he's always been talented, I think Mendes' performances over the last year, especially at the Worlds, go to show just how dominant he has become. It will be interesting to see how much more he can achieve in jiu jitsu. Rafa's interview offers some great thoughts and opinions on his jiu jitsu life, competing and making a living through the art, so make sure you check it out.

"AMAURY WAS KNOWN AS MY UNCLE CARLSON'S BEST STUDENT AND MANY BELIEVE HIM TO BE THE BEST JIU JITSU FIGHTER EVER"

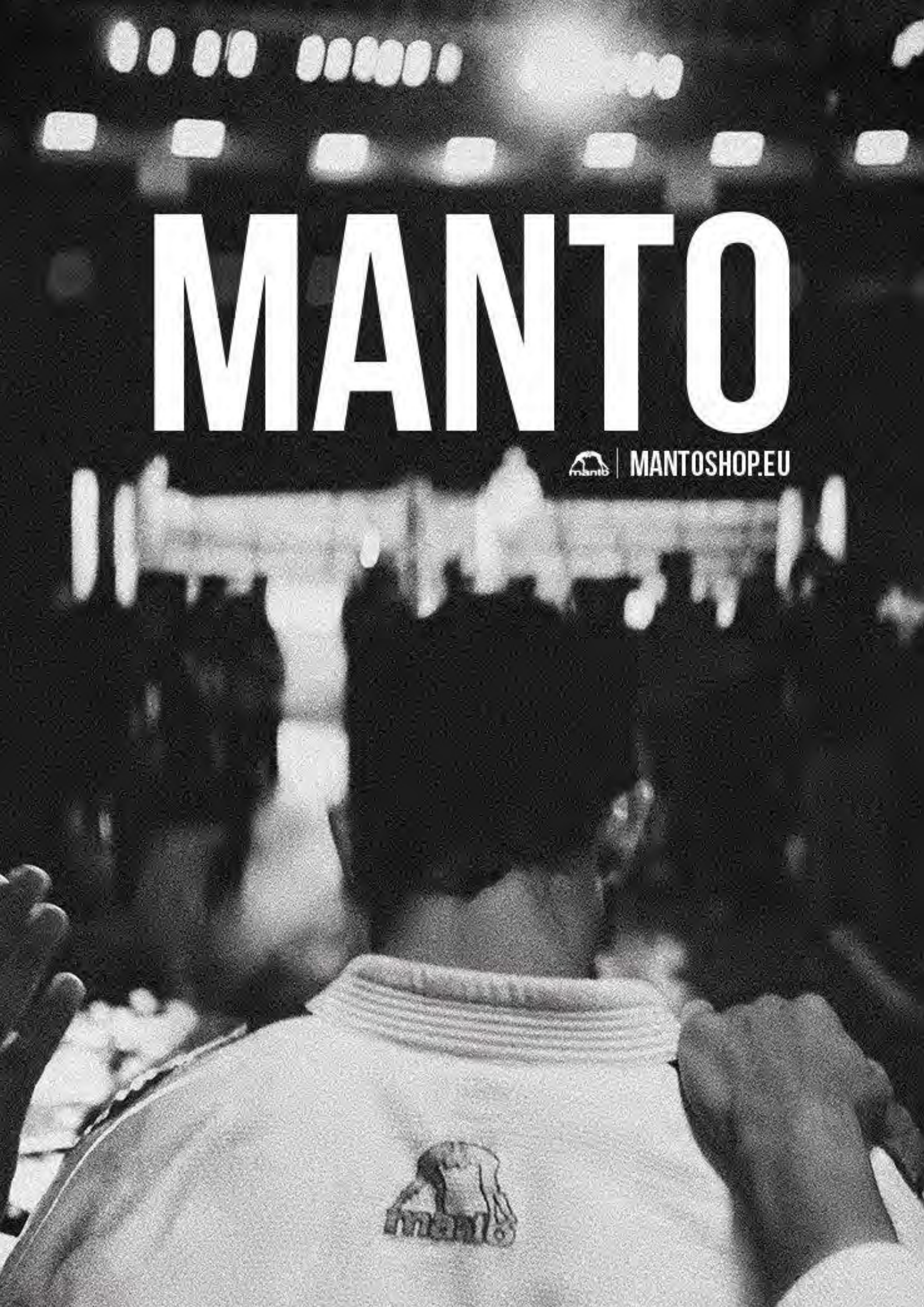
I'm also delighted to say we managed to catch up with a true jiu jitsu legend, Amaury Bitetti. Amaury was known as my uncle Carlson's best student and many believe him to be the best jiu jitsu fighter ever. It's always great to hear stories from the old days, so this is an interview you don't want to miss.

We have a great nogi section for you with my student, Oliver Geddes. When Oli first arrived at my academy he literally attended every single class we had on offer. I could see from those early days that he was very committed to jiu jitsu and Oli has gone on to become a great competitor and also a very talented teacher, so make sure you check out his tips.

In our second ever "Classic Match" feature, we focus on Terere and Marcelo Garcia's famous match from 2003. I really like the idea of us focusing in on iconic matches through history, and this is one that will always be remembered in my eyes. Both Terere and Marcelo are guys that I respect immensely and was lucky enough to face on the mats. I hope you enjoy this Classic Match feature as much as I did.

Enjoy the latest issue of the magazine guys and – until next time – keep training and enjoying jiu jitsu.

ROGER GRACIE


MANTO
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THE BIG PICTURE

Tim Spriggs emerged as the underdog winner of the first ever FIVE Grappling Super League, defeating the likes of Yuri Simoes and walking away with a $10,000 cash prize.

PICTURE VIA FIVE GRAPPLING

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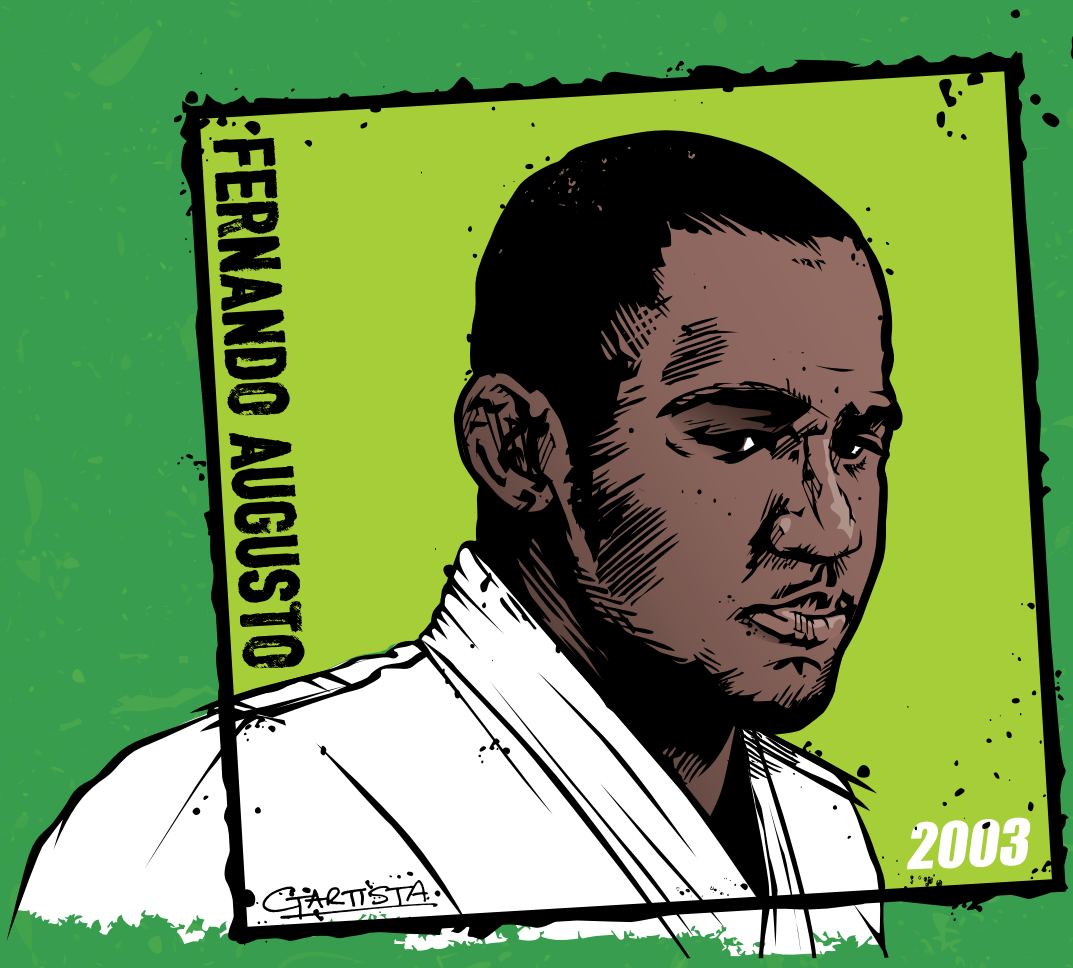

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BACKGROUND

If you asked experienced grapplers to name the two best competitors of the last 15 years, along with Roger Gracie, the names Marcelo Garcia and Fernando Terere would be a popular choice. Both men hold multiple prestigious titles and each also had a significant, long-lasting influence on the BJJ competition scene.

Terere grew up in the Morro do Cantagalo favela, making money as a child by offering to watch parked cars. One of the drivers happened to be Alliance black belt Octavio 'Ratinho' Couto, who invited the 11 year old Terere to come and train at Strike Jiu Jitsu (where Ratinho taught in Leblon, alongside Roberto Traven and Alexandre Paiva).

In a 2004 interview translated on global-training-report.com, Terere described how "We were kids from the favela. We grew up fighting day and night and running away from the police. Thanks to this form of 'training' our bodies were strong. Children in the academy were nothing to us, no problems at all."

Poverty meant that in the favela, drug dealers were a potent presence. Terere did some work for the Commando Vermelho gang who were effectively in charge of the favela: fortunately for his future, he was invited to be an instructor at Ratinho's school just in time. That instructor role led him to mentor a whole host of massively successful BJJ fighters, perhaps most famously Andre Galvao.

Garcia began his training in judo, before learning BJJ under a Rickson black belt named Iran Brasileiro. As a purple belt, Garcia would eventually make the move to Sao Paulo, thanks to encouragement from his future wife Tatiana and an invitation from Terere himself to join his teaching staff. Terere was still under the Alliance team: Garcia would strengthen his organisational ties after moving to teach directly under Fabio 'The General' Gurgel. The link between Garcia and Terere was broken by one of the most significant splits in jiu jitsu's short history, when the powerhouse Alliance team fragmented in 2002. Garcia stuck with Gurgel, whereas Terere ended up forming the TT team with fellow Alliance alumnus Eduardo Telles.

Coming into the 2003 Mundials, Terere was looking for his second world title (having earned his first in 2000, defeating Nino Schembri). Marcelo Garcia was one of Alliance's bright new stars, a freshly minted black belt carrying an extra burden, since so many of the old Alliance competition team had departed the previous year. Garcia and Terere met in the final of the middleweight division.

MARCELO GARCIA'S GUARD WAS FINALLY PASSED AFTER APPROXIMATELY 5 MINUTES

THE 2003 VICTORY WAS TERERE'S SECOND BLACK BELT WORLD TITLE

WORDS: CAN SÖNMEZ ILLUSTRATION: GARTISTA

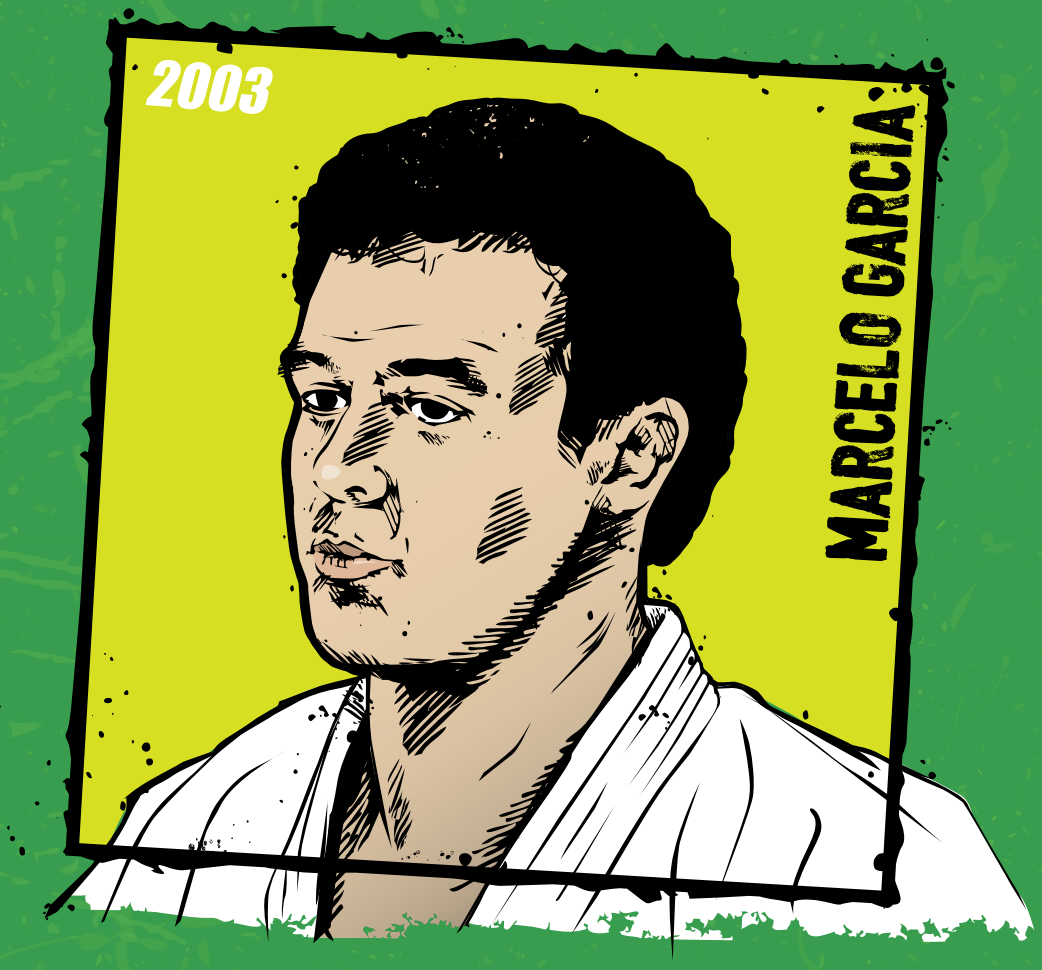
THE MATCH

Marcelo almost immediately looks to pull guard, swiftly passed by Terere. Marcelo manages to work back to half guard, then just under two minutes into the match, the two men are battling in open guard. Marcelo works to get control of Terere's leg, but Terere is able to maintain his top position, securing the pass into side control at around five and a half minutes.

Terere dominates with a heavy cross face, until, after two minutes, Marcelo powerfully bridges free and turns away. Terere still has strong upper body control. He tries for Marcelo's back but can't establish his hooks. Instead, Terere rapidly whips his leg across to mount. A few seconds later, at a little under the eight minute mark (including a reset that ate up a minute earlier on), Marcelo finally comes on top, but that's only because Terere is setting up a triangle. Marcelo attempts to stack, but doesn't have time to do anything except tap.

Terere is the middleweight champion.

MATCH LENGTH: 7 MINS 45 SECS **LOCATION:** RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
DATE: 1ST JUNE 2003 **EVENT:** MUNDIALS 2003
VENUE: TIJUCA TENIS CLUBE **ATTENDANCE:** 4,500



Mundial 2003

AFTERMATH

Despite the antipathy you might expect when an ex-teacher faces an ex-student, Marcelo accepted his defeat with good grace. The two embraced each other, with a show of respect. That mutual admiration continued in the press. In the global-training-report.com translation, Terere stated:

"Marcelo Garcia is a genius. In the 2003 Mundial, he performed without any mistakes. He did what he wanted to do. But I had enough ability to follow his way to the finish, no matter how he brought me into his favourite style."

In 2004, Terere cemented his superiority by beating Marcelo again in a Japan Open superfight. In the same year, he gave another incredible performance in the Mundials, deciding to fight at ultra heavyweight (100+kg) despite being a middleweight (82kg). Terere made it all the way to the final, losing only to Fabricio Werdum.

Sadly, 2004 was the last time we would get to see Terere compete at the Mundials. Not long after his amazing run at ultra heavyweight, he was involved in an altercation on a plane. As a result, he was arrested and fell into drug addiction. He unsuccessfully tried to get clean in 2006, before a more concerted effort in 2009 at a rehabilitation clinic (helped by Marcelo Garcia among others). By 2012, he was officially diagnosed with schizophrenia. Though the Mundials is unlikely to feature Terere again, he was able to compete at the Europeans in 2013, reaching the final where he lost to Claudio Calasans.

Marcelo has had a rather happier time. Picking himself up after the loss to Terere, Marcelo Garcia has since established a competitive pedigree that is almost unmatched. Terere's victory proved to be the last time Marcelo was beaten as a Mundials middleweight: nobody has been able to equal Terere's feat since that competition. With Marcelo's retirement (having dominated every Mundials he entered since 2003) it is now impossible that anybody ever will.

In 2009 he opened up his academy in New York, where it seems Marcelo is following in Terere's footsteps as a mentor for champions. Only time will tell, but Marcelo Garcia's brown belt 'Dream Team' is progressing to the black belt division. Marcelinho can already point to his student Dominyka Obelynyte's incredible success, winning double gold in her first go at the black belt Mundials division and still barely 20 years old. As for Terere, today he has a new academy and a new future. Speaking with BJJ Hacks in 2014, Terere noted that:

"I had to pass through some hard times in my life, but now, I'm living in the moment, I'm planting my future. If I live in the moment well, I'll reap a good future. I think the future will be cool. A full gym, affiliates, family, love and peace in life. This is what I'm trying for, I'm on the right path."

TERERE SPENT 43.2% OF THE FIGHT TRYING TO PASS THE OPEN GUARD

SOURCES: GLOBAL-TRAINING-REPORT.COM, BLOODYELBOW.COM, GRACIEMAG.COM BJJHEROES.COM, BJJHACKS.COM

‘BE THE CHANGE’ KIMONO

progressjj.co.uk

Athlete: Sean Coates
GB Nottingham
Bronze Medalist 2014 Worlds
British Champion 2014

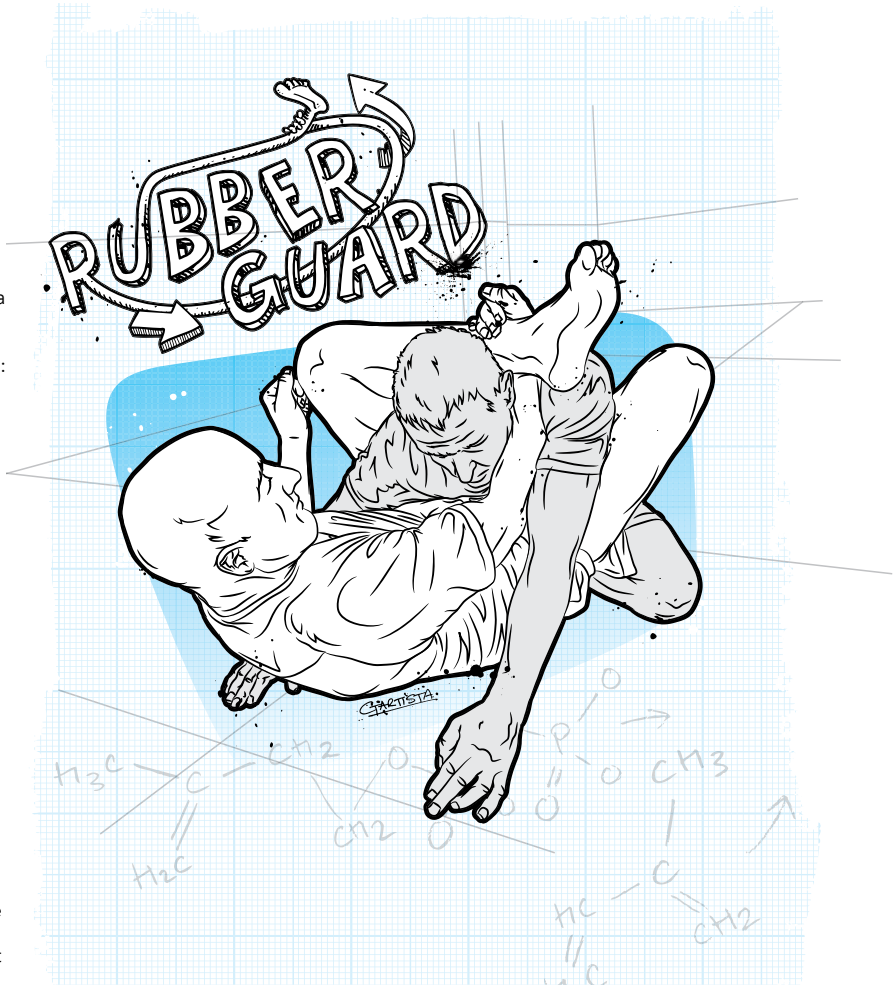
WORDS: ANDRE BORGES ILLUSTRATION: GARTISTA

POSITION STUDY

THE RUBBER GUARD

The rubber guard is a grappling position of unknown origin that was first seen being put to use in competitions by Nino Schembri in the late 1990s, also later being picked up by Eddie Bravo in the early 2000s. Bravo went on to develop a training method heavily based on this particular position within his 10th Planet System.

The rubber guard is a variation of the open guard where the guard player will grab their own shin with the opposite arm (example: right arm grabbing left shin) over their opponent's back. The grip should be performed with the palm of the hand facing upwards and the forearm should be in contact with the collar bone. These details will help the guard player keep their opponent's posture down, avoiding the guard passer mounting any attacks.



THE HISTORY OF THE RUBBER GUARD

Though the origin of the rubber guard is unknown, according to a few jiu jitsu figures, the shin control had been in use in grappling for as long as they could remember. This included Nino Schembri who, when asked about the position for this piece, said:

"For me, this is just a variation of the open guard; only after I came to the USA I heard about all these guard names. Actually, the 'rubber guard' I found out about six years ago (2009), when a student told me that I was one of the creators of the position. I immediately asked, 'what is that?' (laughs). If I start creating names for every position, we will have millions of names, because positions are endless, there are so many controls for the omoplata and gogoplata."

Regardless of its date of origin, the position was seen being performed (mainly by Schembri) in the late 1990s in competitions, as he developed his open guard game which was heavily reliant on the omoplata and the gogoplata choke (the latter was one of Nino's creations). In mixed martial arts, the first recording of the position in a mainstream event appeared in 2004 at "Pride Critical Countdown 2004" in a fight between the aforementioned Schembri and Kazushi Sakuraba.

THE 10TH PLANET EFFECT

Eddie Bravo is a well-known name on the grappling circuit, famed for his use of the twister submission, the rubber guard, the creation of the 10th Planet System and his close friendship with the charismatic UFC commentator, Joe Rogan. Bravo and his vast following, composed of students and MMA fans, became the main advocates for this position.

The talented American became a household name after his win over Royler Gracie at the ADCC (2003) quarter-final, having submitted the legendary Gracie with a triangle. His win over such a prestigious member of the Gracie family caused major waves in the jiu jitsu community. This positive feedback, associated with Joe Rogan's regular promotion of the 10th Planet rubber guard training system over the UFC broadcasts, raised awareness for Bravo's program, often labelled as "the evolution of jiu jitsu" by both Bravo and Rogan.

The banner of innovation/evolution of the rubber guard system and the tremendous TV exposure brought a legion of students through the 10th Planet academy doors, quickly becoming one of the biggest grappling franchises in the world with thousands of students and academies in every corner of the planet, from the USA to Europe, Australia and even Africa. This famed method caught the interest of several already accomplished grapplers and MMA fighters such as Matt Horwich, George Sotiropoulos, Shinya Aoki, Vinny Magalhaes, Alan Belcher and others. Aoki is the fighter who achieved the most results at a high level of competition using the guard.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE RUBBER GUARD

Though the rubber guard system has been heavily publicised since 2003, the evolution of high level jiu jitsu in nogi seems to have circumvented the rubber guard somehow and adopted more mobile styles of guards during this period. Examples of this are the x-guard, the reverse de la Riva, half guard (and all its variations) or 50/50, etc. Though the rubber guard is still used with frequency, it is mainly utilised by students of the 10th Planet System.

There may be a number of reasons for this to have happened, from its flexibility requirements, the lack of sweeping/reversal options offered by the position or even that gi bottoms are often preferred when applying it and those are not allowed in many competitions.

Despite the position's main aim of helping jiu jitsu succeed inside the cage, it seems to have fallen into a limbo. As the UFC evolved to shorter rounds with a scoring system that benefits striking, takedowns and top control on the ground, the rubber guard's efficiency in the sport was compromised, as it too often relies on time to work the top fighter into a submission.If there are arguments to be made against the rubber guard in these sports, there are others to be made for it, especially in the self-defence realm, as it is a position that presents options to nullify attacks from an aggressor.

BELT PROMOTIONS

IF YOU WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE AWARDED A NEW BELT RECENTLY, THIS PAGE REPRESENTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SAVOUR THE MOMENT WITH RECOGNITION IN JIU JITSU STYLE! SEND IN DETAILS OF YOUR RECENT PROMOTION, INCLUDING THE RANK YOU ACHIEVED AND YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, AND WE WILL PUBLISH AS MANY AS WE CAN IN OUR MAGAZINE.

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Sam Cook was promoted to brown belt by Chico Mendes, head of Checkmat Europe.

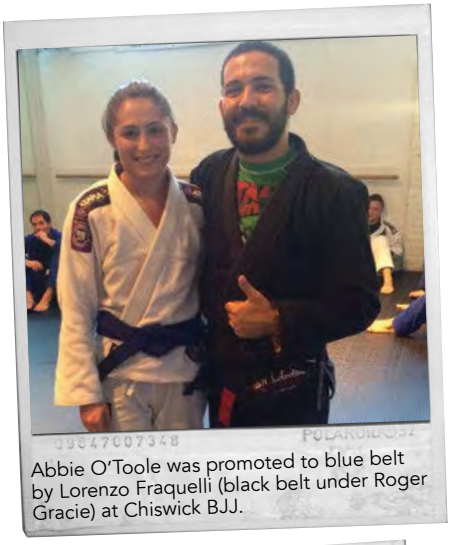
Hannah Waddington of Elements BJJ in Brighton was promoted to blue belt by Miad Najafi & Yousuf Nabi.

Lyes Abid was promoted to purple belt by Roger Gracie, Maicon Gomes and Paulo Roberto at Frontline Muay Thai, Roger Gracie Academy, Oslo.

Lee Simpson and his fiancée, Nicola Fishwick, were promoted to brown and blue belt respectively by "Kojak" from Kojak's Team Sukata.

Marc Barton, Alex McGuire and Adam Turner were promoted to brown belt by Nic Gregoriades at Jiu JItsu Brotherhood London and the Tokon Academy.

Miguel Coelho (right) & Al Faris (left) were promoted to purple belt by Professor Arlans Siqueira.



Abbie O'Toole was promoted to blue belt by Lorenzo Fraquelli (black belt under Roger Gracie) at Chiswick BJJ.

Jimi Ziermans was promoted to blue belt by Mathieu Peters, Jiu Jitsu Factory, Netherlands.

Ted Williams was promoted to blue belt by Matt Baker at Bakersfield Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

Jack Brickley was promoted to blue belt by Jeff Lawson (right) and Kevin Hall (left).

Andrew Good was promoted to blue belt by Professor Alain Pozo at Carlson Gracie Essex.

Alan Burrows was promoted to purple belt by Lee Johnstone at Combat Sports Academy.

Rossy Newton and Tony Henderson were promoted to blue belt by Professor David Iverson of Gracie Barra Tamworth.

Nicholas King was promoted to blue belt by Jörgen Sanz at Hilti BJJ Stockholm, Sweden.

Mateusz Kacperski was promoted to purple belt by Roger Gracie.

Sam Woodhouse was promoted to blue belt by Kev Capel at Roger Gracie Buckinghamshire.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

THE POWER OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

As jiu jitsu practitioners, we are fully aware of the ways in which the gentle art enriches our lives. The benefits seem to be never ending: it keeps us fit, builds our confidence, promotes friendship, improves self-esteem and so on and so on. With such a compelling list of advantages on the table, Gracie Barra's credo "Jiu Jitsu for Everyone" couldn't ring more true. Jiu Jitsu is good – we're agreed – so how can we help it grow as a mainstream sport?

Our community is full of great people working tirelessly to promote BJJ to the masses and there's no denying that great strides have been made. We've seen the biggest concentration of professional tournaments all flourishing, with the likes of Polaris Pro, Eddie Bravo Invitational, Five Grappling and Metamoris all leading the way. Despite all this, it seems a much simpler (and cheaper) promotional avenue shouldn't be overlooked – get the celebrities involved!

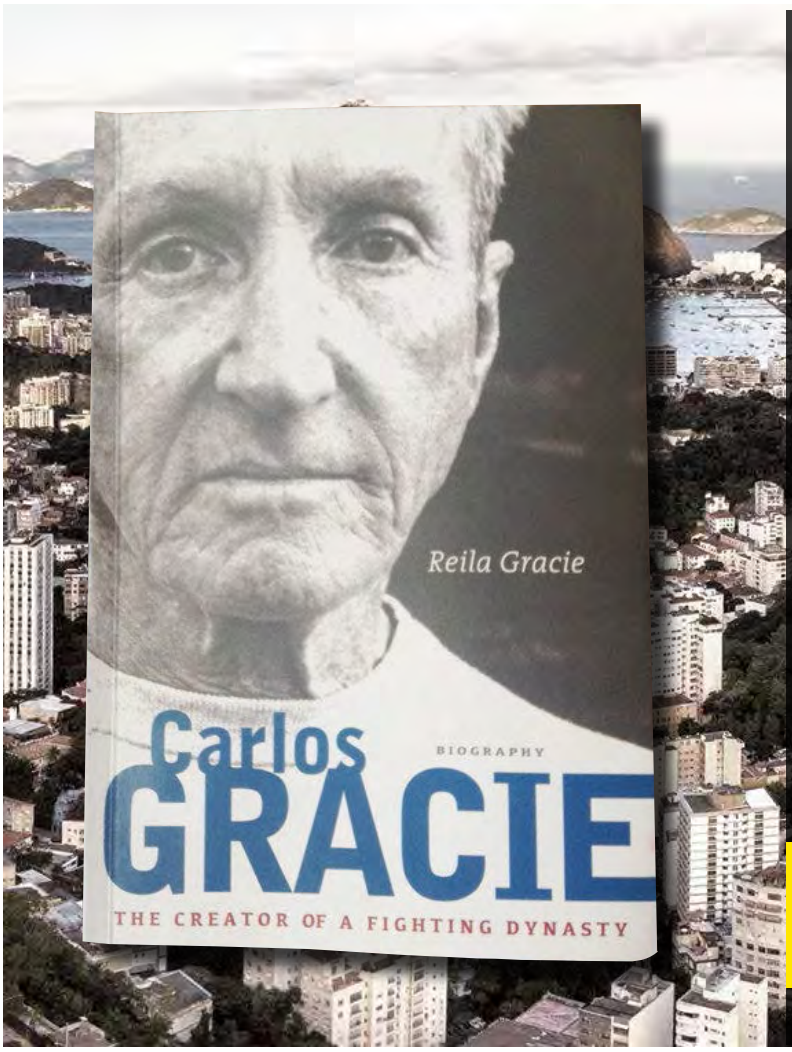
Seriously, as long as it's not Kanye West, pictures and videos of celebrities training jiu jitsu is a sure fire way to help promote the benefits of our sport to the general public. A recent shot of Keanu Reeves donning a gi and training with the Machado Brothers nearly crashed the internet, and there's absolutely no way that kind of exposure can be replicated through tournaments and seminars.

It must be said that celebrity endorsement is nothing new. In fact, jiu jitsu's rapid growth through the '00s is in no small part down to the tireless promotional efforts of UFC commentator (and Eddie Bravo black belt), Joe Rogan. If Joe Rogan was, say, a boxer, there's no way he would have been so active in his use of jiu jitsu terminology, and fight fans wouldn't have become educated in ground fighting as quickly. as they have.

There's no doubt that the endeavours of the likes of Ashton Kutcher, Guy Ritchie and the late Paul Walker as jiu jitsu practitioners have helped to spread the word and educate people on the benefits it brings. You may remember Royce Gracie's slogan t-shirt from a past UFC event, which read "I did it before it was cool"; well there's nothing wrong with jiu jitsu being cool – in fact quite the opposite! Will BJJ become a popular mainstream sport? Who knows, but there's no denying the next five years or so are going to be extremely interesting.

Thanks for picking up our latest issue, and keep training!

CALLUM MEDCRAFT



THE DEFINITIVE BJJ BOOK IS AVAILABLE IN EUROPE!

CARLOS GRACIE: THE CREATOR OF A FIGHTING DYNASTY

Reila Gracie's renowned biography of Carlos Gracie Snr. has now been translated into English and we are thrilled to offer up this limited edition classic in the UK.

At well over 500 pages, this huge undertaking took Reila more than 10 years to research and put together. There are many fascinating previously unpublished photos of Carlos, his siblings, and many of their children as well.

"Reila Gracie tells her father's story, including his first martial arts lessons, the fights he got himself into, the family rifts and dramas, details of the main fights and how he created the style known as Brazilian jiu-jitsu." *Isto E Gente Magazine* (Brazil)

"Carlos Gracie's daughter and Helio's niece, Reila, has written the most controversial book about the dynasty of fighters and, even more, has turned the spotlight on to the women in the most famous family of tough guys in Brazil." *O Globo Magazine* (Brazil)

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IT'S SCIENCE:

THE MIYAO BROTHERS

BY TYLER BISHOP

FEW FIGHTERS HAVE CAUSED AS MUCH HYPE WITHIN THE JIU JITSU COMMUNITY IN RECENT YEARS THAN JOAO AND PAULO MIYAO. NOW RESIDENTS OF NEW YORK, THE BROTHERS CUT THEIR TEETH UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF CICERO COSTHA IN SAO PAULO, BRAZIL. THE MIYAO BROTHERS ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR DYNAMIC, MODERN GUARD GAMES, WHICH ARE CENTRED AROUND DE LA RIVA AND BERIMBOLO ATTACKS.

THE AVERAGE MATCH LENGTH WAS APPROXIMATELY

6 MINUTES 50 SECS

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THE SCIENCE OF JIU JITSU

'It's Science' is brought to you by BishopBjj.com. The goal of BishopBjj.com is to expand and empower the jiu jitsu community by emphasising the science and art of jiu jitsu in fun and exciting ways. We want to highlight what makes jiu jitsu so calculated, but also what makes it so much fun.

75%

OF THEIR MATCHES ENDED BY SUBMISSION ONCE THEY GOT THE BACK

THE MIYAO BROS SHARE AN 86% WIN RATIO IN THEIR MATCHES

50%

OF THEIR PASSES WERE OF THE LEG DRAG VARIETY

57%

OF THEIR SWEEPS WERE BERIMBOLO-BASED ATTACKS

88%

OF THEIR SUBMISSIONS OCCURRED FROM THE BACK

THEY SCORED FIRST IN 11 OF THE 15 MATCHES OBSERVED

ABSTRACT:

All matches observed of Paulo and Joao Miyao, used in this small sample occurred at IBJJF events, inside of their weight division, and in the years 2013-2015. Only techniques, occurrences, and outcomes that were recorded are displayed in the data below (i.e. if no butterfly sweeps occurred, there will not be a representation of that in the sample data charts). Matches were selected at random based on freely available matches. This is a limited sample but – 'given the estimated amount of matches in this time period – it is well above the percentage necessary to create a scientifically validated trend sampling.

NUMBER OF MATCHES OBSERVED	15
TOTAL MINUTES OBSERVED	103
MATCHES WON BY SUBMISSION	09
MATCHES WON BY POINTS	04
OPPONENT WON MATCH	02
TOTAL MATCHES DRAWN	00
TOTAL MATCHES WON	13

THE BREAKDOWN

When we did our study on Rafael and Gui Mendes we felt it was important to separate their data and evaluate each individually. We did this because both of their games were statistically different. With Paulo and Joao Miyao, this is not the case. The extraordinary Brazilian duo possess nearly identical competition approaches, and so we found it appropriate to combine their data together. This way we can all see exactly what the Miyaos' secrets actually are.

THE STUDY

Anyone who has ever watched one of the Miyao brothers compete should already have a really good idea of where this study is heading. Most of us can imagine the dynamic duo pulling guard and spinning their way to the back for the win. However, what you might not know is just how effective they are at this strategy and how diligent they are with it.

In the matches we viewed, the Miyao brothers possessed an 86% win rate. Not only that, but their submission rate was approximately 60%. This means they are finishing nearly 70% of their wins with a submission, at black belt!

Both Paulo and Joao are often criticised for having a very one dimensional game plan and approach in competition. However, we would argue that the consistencies in their game don't differ much from the level of diversity that you would see with the likes of Rafa Mendes, Rafael Lovato Jr, or Bernardo Faria.

The Miyaos, as expected, are extremely effective at taking the back via berimbolo. In fact, we even had to add several categories to our static data log to track things appropriately, as it was the only way to correctly categorise what they do. The duo were able to complete a berimbolo to the back in over 60% of their matches. Once on their opponent's back, Joao and Paulo had a 75% finishing rate.

What's important to keep in mind is that while the Miyao are extremely efficient with the berimbolo and leg drag, they are not deficient in other areas of their game. In the instances where they were forced to use other sweeps or guard passes, they were extremely successful.

Ultimately, what's most impressive about the Miyaos is how they've been able to maintain their success against opponents who have been on a steep learning curve to adapt to their game. At this point, all other competitors know exactly what to expect when they step on the mat against Joao or Paulo. Fortunately for the two brothers, this hasn't stopped them from executing their strategy.

Although only one of the two currently holds an IBJJF world title, it is fair to expect that it will not be the only one that these two are able to achieve between them.

SWEEP (POSITION)

DE LA RIVA	2
BERIMBOLO TO THE TOP	8
50/50	2
X-GUARD	2

SWEEP (TYPE)

X-GUARD	2
TOMANAGI	1
SCISSOR	1
BERIMBOLO	8
MISC. OTHER	2

PASS (POSITION)

ON KNEES	0
HALF-GUARD	0
FROM BERIMBOLO	6
STANDING	2

PASS (TYPE)

LEG DRAG	4
KNEE OVER	2
KNEE THROUGH	2

TAKING THE BACK

SIDE CONTROL	2
FROM FINISHING BERIMBOLO	10

SUBMISSION (POSITION)

BACK	8
SIDE CONTROL	1

SUBMISSION (TYPE)

CHOKE FROM BACK	7
ARMBAR	1
NECK CHOKE (GUILLOTINE, ETC)	1

SUMMARY

SUCCESSES: BERIMBOLOS & CHOKES FROM THE BACK

AVOIDED: HALF GUARD & THE MOUNT

TOP TECHNIQUE: BERIMBOLOS

HISTORY 101: VALENTE BROTHERS

There has been an increasing split in jiu jitsu into two main strands. On the one side is the BJJ we all know, grounded in competition. On the other, there is a form of jiu jitsu much closer in character to martial arts like aikido and karate, valuing conservation as a primary virtue. Adherents often refer to this as 'self defence' jiu jitsu, or indeed simply Gracie jiu jitsu.

The Valente brothers are an example of that second camp. Their dedication to the vision of jiu jitsu as it was taught in the first half of the 20th century is clear in everything they do and say. On the front of their school, SELF DEFENSE is emblazoned in large letters at the top, with 'Gracie Jiu Jitsu' in much smaller characters underneath. That commitment continues in their logo, a stylized representation of one standing figure launching a high kick at another.

It isn't just any standing figure. According to the Valente Brothers website, the logo was based on a picture featuring their father, Pedro Valente Sr. In 1980 at the Academia Gracie, he was photographed launching a high kick at his teacher, Helio Gracie, in order to demonstrate a defensive technique. Pedro Valente Sr began training at the Academia Gracie back when Helio was the head instructor, in the middle of the 20th Century.

Pedro's first encounter with grappling arts was judo, at the age of nine. Three years later in 1952, Pedro Sr's father Syllo brought him to the legendary match where Helio Gracie was defeated by the great Japanese judoka, Masahiko Kimura. Despite Helio's loss, Syllo was sufficiently convinced by his technical ability to send young Pedro to the Academia Gracie. By the time Pedro Sr featured in that high kicking photography, he was Dr Valente, a prominent plastic surgeon. His medical career would lead to a Chief Doctor position at the Vasco de Gama football team, and even a stint as Secretary of Health in Rio de Janeiro.

Although the Valente brothers were not directly related to the Gracies, they were nevertheless close. This was thanks to the relationship between their father Pedro Valente Sr and Helio Gracie. Gui told the Gracie Jiu Jitsu Rocks podcast that his father got him on the mat before he had learned how to walk. Not long after, at the age of two, he began studying with Helio directly. According to their website, all three of the brothers had the same early start under Helio. It wasn't just on the mats: Gui describes Helio as "practically a grandfather", fondly remembering how they would "spend weekends and sometimes even an entire vacation living with him in his ranch."

Pedro Valente Jr, the eldest of the three brothers, was the first to move to the United States. This was the culmination of Pedro Sr's plan to ensure his sons were educated in

English: all three of them went to English speaking schools in Brazil. Pedro Jr originally hoped to go to California, given that he had already spent time visiting Helio's son Rorion at the Gracie Academy in Torrance. Pedro Sr was able to convince him to go to Florida instead, due to the closer distance and the cultural similarities to Brazil.

Pedro Jr duly earned a place at the University of Miami School of Business Administration. However, his father also sent him to spend a whole month at Helio's home in Itaipava, no doubt excellent preparation for beginning a school over in the USA. Pedro's timing was perfect: he started teaching in 1993. While Royce was turning the martial arts world upside down in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (an event at which Pedro was present), the eldest Valente brother was building his teaching skills.

In 1995, University of Miami students had the good fortune of their own jiu jitsu class, run by Valente. The main school would also get regular visits from Helio, right up until his final trip outside of Brazil in 2007, two years before his death. Gui Valente moved to the States after high school in 1999, attending Barry University in South Florida. All three of the Valente brothers (Pedro, Gui and Joaquim) are graduates, in Business Administration, Sport Management and Criminology respectively. According to Gui,

"The plan was to pursue our own careers as businessmen. However, as I learned, everything happens for a reason and the school that my older brother started – just to have a place to train as he completed his studies – has in fact become our lives' focus"

The Valente brothers' approach proved to have appeal outside of Miami, with affiliates dotted around Florida, as well as further afield in Guatemala City. Christopher Charalambous, who had around a year of BJJ training under his belt, decided after a stint at the Miami academy that he had also found the school for him. The problem was that Charalambous lived in Derbyshire. Nevertheless, since that first visit he committed to annual extended visits where he trains for a month, packing in as many classes as possible, along with assisting in the instruction of children's classes. According to his website, Charalambous was persuaded by Gui to open up his own club back in the UK. Chesterfield Jiu Jitsu has now produced several blue belts, including Rachel Green, a familiar face on the local BJJ competition scene. Her stalwart band of supporters are never far behind, resplendent in their 'Team Rachel' t-shirts.

Close ties to the Gracie family have continued, such as the Valente brothers' relationship with UFC pioneer Royce Gracie. In 2012, Royce invited his students to take part in the annual promotion ceremony at the main Gracie Miami location. As Gui told *Graciemag*, "Royce brought his students from every corner of the planet for evaluation at our academy. It was a striking event, with jiu jitsu practitioners coming from as far as Mexico and even Kenya." On the same day, the brothers received a ceremonial key to the city of Miami from its mayor, George Vallejo, who happened to be a purple belt at the time. Also present was Pedro Valente Sr: today, after over sixty years dedicated to jiu jitsu and a thriving school founded by his sons, he proudly wears a red belt around his waist.

TIMELINE

1952
Pedro Sr attends the Helio versus Kimura fight, together with his father

1980
Pedro Sr acts as Helio's uke for a high kick defence. This later forms the basis of the Valente Brothers logo

1993
Pedro Jr founds Gracie Miami during his studies at the University of Miami

1995
Pedro Jr starts a class for fellow UM students

1999
Younger brother Gui arrives in the States, taking his degree at Barry University

2007
Joaquim Valente follows in Gui's footsteps, also attending Barry University and helping at the academy

2012
Royce Gracie brings his students from around the world to be evaluated at the Valente Brothers' school

SOURCES: GRACIEMIAMI.COM • GRACIE JIU JITSU ROCKS PODCAST, #015 • GRACIEMAG.COM
CHESTERFIELDJIUJITSU.CO.UK • ORGANICEYOURLIFE.COM

FLYING HIGH NOW

EDWIN NAJMI

Edwin Najmi has had an explosive few years in jiu jitsu. A Romulo Barral student since 2009, he recently earned his black belt from the former world champion, after becoming world champion himself. Renowned for the flying triangle, Najmi talks about his tough jiu jitsu upbringing and how he has set about showing the world he's more than a one trick pony.

Edwin, doing our research, we see that your interest in combat sports came from what was described as 'beatdowns' amongst your family as a kid…

[Laughs] I should probably clarify that it was more like friendly wrestling than beatdowns! It was like this; I didn't have any older brothers but I had older cousins who I used to wrestle with for fun and one of them knew some jiu jitsu and yeah, he used to beat me up, so I suppose I started training to get back at him.

He's my cousin but he's like an older brother, when you don't have that, because it's the closest thing you have to that, you know?

Ah! So he knew jiu jitsu at the time; was it traditional or Brazilian?

Well, it wasn't even jiu jitsu, it was just grappling. He used to train a form of grappling at an old Judo place in town

Looking back, was there any specific moment he did something to you that made you think, 'Man, that's cool'?

Hmm, not really. It was just kind of general, like he would put me in a kimura and I'd be like, 'What do I do? I've just been trying to throw him against the wall and now my arm's locked.' It used to interest me and of course, I used to watch the UFC and stuff so everything combined, it just led me to training.

What was life like for a young Edwin Najmi, before he walked into a jiu jitsu academy for the first time?

I was just a normal kid you know, I went to high school and the year before I started jiu jitsu I used to do grappling once a week. Eventually after that, I switched to jiu jitsu and my life was pretty normal up until, I think, about purple belt. I didn't really take it that seriously up until then.

So, you found jiu jitsu. Can you remember the first time you walked into Romulo Barral's gym; what was it that led you to walking through those doors that day?

There was nothing in particular really man, but I got lucky. It was the closest gym to my house and was right by the local Subway that I used to eat at every day. It was a local MMA gym, I walked in and it happened to be Romulo – I had no idea, I was super lucky to be honest. I thought they were lying when they told me he was a world champion. I was like, 'No way, not by my house,' and then he turned out to be pretty legit.

"What, a world champion around here? No way man"…

Exactly, I thought they were BS-ing me and then I think it was that very weekend he went and won the Worlds. 2009, something like that, so I ended up there the next week like, 'Oh man, this guy is legit!'

It was almost as if he went out there to prove he was legit to this prospective student then!

[Laughs] Yeah, exactly! I think my other option, which I found out recently, was Jean-Jacques Machado so either or, it's crazy. Two schools around me that I could have walked in that were super high level. Either pick wouldn't have been wrong.

The best thing is that you ended up walking through one of those doors then?

For sure, exactly! So happy I didn't walk in to any McDojos.

Research suggests that you and Romulo have this training relationship that most people would be jealous of. Apparently he made you do spider guard with no sweeps, no submissions, no nothing but maintaining position. What did that do for you?

Yeah, that helped propel me to where I am for sure. Back when I was a white belt, my parents came in and said, 'Romulo, do whatever you want with him, you can beat him up, make him cry, do whatever!' and I feel really lucky because there aren't many people who have that relationship with him. Nobody knows that it wasn't just that, like, I'm for sure lucky, but man I got yelled at more than anybody; he moulded me to what I am today.

People say at the end of class, 'You and Edwin are such good friends,' and I'll say to them, 'You should have seen me at blue belt' – I would train with like twenty fresh guys. He'd beat me up every day and that really helped my mental strength. The spider guard thing too, for sure, that helped a lot. I'm glad I trusted him, I feel a lot of people would have quit but I'm glad I made the right choice.

Was it ever frustrating at the time?

For sure. Even now, I try to win by submission and not by points, but then I had no idea how to hold somebody. I'd try to throw a triangle from spider guard and he would bark, 'No attacks!' and it would eat away at me inside man! It was definitely tough but it helped so much.

You have a reputation for the triangle. In those days he would train you against the glory of the submission for a greater long term purpose and, ironically, by making you avoid going for submissions, you're now competing at the top level.

I see guys trying for the berimbolo and I'm like, 'Cool, but can you hold a guy in your guard for ten minutes? I feel like all these lessons and stuff haven't even been put to use yet and they were for black belt level. You watch Michael Langhi fight and he'll maintain spider guard for ten minutes. It's crazy, who else can do that?

I haven't used half the lessons I've learned yet. It will come into place.

Recently you made a successful black belt debut too.

It was fun, you know it was a super fight in Toronto for Submission Series Pro. I had a pretty tough opponent from Brazil in a submission only match. It could have gone better, to be honest I didn't train much after the Worlds. I hurt my knee in the last five seconds of the final so I didn't get to prepare much, but considering all those factors, I won by submission so it went good.

I was pretty upset, I lost a lot of good positions but it happens, it's alright.

And obviously being submission only, is that something you'd look at doing more or are you happy with standard competition format?

I'm open to both but I guess submission only is better for athletes. They pay and actually make an athlete out of you which is good, but I'm open to both. I feel like there aren't too many guys who are capable of both; they tend to be one or the other so bring on either.

We didn't want to touch on this too much, rather explore more about you. But, your flying triangles are ridiculous – are high fliers born, or raised?

Honestly, I didn't even believe everyone could do it myself until I taught a seminar in Montreal on the flying triangle. It was full of all different ages, sizes, weights and experience levels and I walked away thinking, 'Man, everyone can do this.' I had my doubts at first, but everyone can do it. You need someone who can break it down for you in the right way – like every other technique. It's like the berimbolo; imagine trying to copy that without having someone break it down for you. Suddenly it becomes understandable and for me, it's way easier than a regular triangle.

That's how it works best for me, just go with the flow, if you react to it then it's there.

So just going back to Montreal, did it make you realise that specific types of jiu jitsu are able to be learned by anyone?

Oh man, I didn't think everyone could do a flying triangle and everybody did it. It felt good, it's a good feeling to give somebody a technique that they really want to do. It opened my eyes and was a good experience – I'll always remember that.

You travelled to Montreal, recently you travelled to Europe. How's the globetrotting been going?

It's fun man, I can't complain. I feel like everywhere you go in the world there is jiu jitsu so I just set up some seminars and had a blast. Everyone is super cool and I'm yet to have a bad experience in jiu jitsu. Everyone is the same, they love it and try to live the same lifestyle, which makes them super nice and welcoming.

Europe was a blast. I was in Berlin and hadn't even planned on teaching but I put out a post and ended up doing like seven or eight seminars. It was a great tour.

It's a good way to get off the beaten track. Local gyms full of local guys in places you'd never go as a tourist.

Exactly, that's what it's about. You go to a city where someone lives there and it's a different place to trying to experience it in one day. As a tourist it might take you ten days to find the good spots in a city so it's awesome.

So have you any more passport stamps lined up for the rest of the year; maybe a Copa Podio appearance again?

Yeah for sure, nothing is confirmed but it's in the works. Hopefully I will be back; we're still talking about that but I have a few things lined up. I'm going to fight in Guatemala against Oswaldo Queixinho in September, which will be a lot of fun, I'll make a trip out of that. I'm also heading to Costa Rica and Mexico so it's going to be a cool year.

Wherever life takes me, because I feel like I'm in my prime, so I feel like a rookie in his first season of the big leagues – I've got to prove I belong, you know!

"I SEE GUYS TRYING FOR THE BERIMBOLO AND I'M LIKE, 'COOL, BUT CAN YOU HOLD A GUY IN YOUR GUARD?"

SEAN COATES | CHASING THE JIU JITSU DREAM

Swapping full time education for full time grappling, 23 year-old Sean Coates took a gamble that paid off. Securing the BJJ247 purple belt absolute European package, to add to his stack of international level medals, this former world bronze medallist continues to rise to the top under the watchful eye of Victor Estima.

You were born in Sheffield, educated in Manchester and now train in Nottingham. So how did that happen?

Born and raised in Sheffield, but I started training jiu jitsu with Victor Estima when he was teaching in Mansfield, which isn't too far. I ended up heading to Manchester to study and then train with Stealth BJJ. Whilst I was training there, I won a sponsorship with Connection Rio to go and stay in Brazil for three months. When I was there I made the decision to drop out of university and train full time. I moved home, got back in touch with Victor who was then in Nottingham; I trained there once, really liked it and packed up ready to train full time.

So what was the academic dream, before the jiu jitsu dream?

[Laughs] Well that's the thing, it was never a dream at all – more the path of least resistance. Not that it was easy, but it was the thing everybody I knew was doing at the time. I was in the system, that's what everybody teaches. So I went to do theoretical physics. I was doing okay but despite liking it the most out of all subjects, I knew it wasn't what I *really* wanted to do, especially whilst training, which was getting more and more intensive. Also, in training you would have people say that they wished they trained at the age I was at – so people saying that inspired me to think 'If I'm going to do this, I should do this now'. There was no eureka moment, it was a gradual thing where I came to realise I was wasting my time doing something I didn't truly enjoy.

The Connection Rio link then, how did living under Dennis Asche come about, going on to train with Mario Sperry?

It was an open sponsorship opportunity where you needed to apply and send a two minute video. Loads of people did it, I didn't make a great video and it took me loads of takes to do but eventually I got it right and sent it in. Three months later I got an offer! Firstly, I was sort of bewildered; I didn't think it was right, to the point I sent them an email to make sure it was legit! It turned out to be fine; being chuffed lasted for about five minutes and then I started to worry about travelling alone for three months. It was nerves and excitement.

Three months seems mental, it seems like such a long time, but as it happens it flew by and I had a really, really good time. I struggled settling in at first and didn't think I could do it, but I pulled my socks up and got stuck in. I would be chatting with people from all over the world every day and it didn't matter because you had an 'in' because everybody trained, you just needed to ask them about their training to break the ice.

"I REALLY DO THINK WE HAVE THE BEST TRAINING IN THE UK AT THE MOMENT. THE LEVEL IS JUST RIDICULOUS"

I used it as a testing ground to train full time, but admittedly it's easier to train full time there in a normal sense. I was training, time wise, full time but it's literally all I did.

Well, you're very lucky having Victor Estima as a full time mentor, with some of the Gracie Barra Birmingham guys thrown in alongside Vanessa English, Gareth Neale and more. Gracie Barra Nottingham is a wicked training environment by the sounds of it.

It's no accident that I train there. I really do think we have the best training in the UK at the moment. The level is just ridiculous, from blue belt to world class black belts who rack the medals up. We have pretty much full time guys at each level and considering that there aren't that many full time guys in the UK, to have that in one room every time makes it super tough and the environment you want to be in, because that's what brings the improvements.

Having Victor there makes it easier, he's a guy who knows what it takes to get to the highest level. It isn't guesswork, he's done it all. If the person in charge is a full time, world class black belt, everything we do is tailored towards becoming that. If the aim is to become world champion, the environment and aim of the gym is that. That's the thing that drags us up; it's our frame of reference and becomes what we train for, whether we realise it or not.

It's clearly paying off and not just for you, but you didn't start off too well at blue belt until you decided to take a 'new, tougher mental approach'. Can you expand some more on that? Whatever it was, it clearly worked as you went on to take gold at the British, gold at the Pro Trials, bronze at the Worlds.

It was a massive change from me getting rinsed over and over, to me then starting to pick up wins. The change wasn't instant, but the first thing I did was to decide to train more and train harder. I was still losing, but I had belief in training. I was tired of feeling like quitting after every loss but I decided to train that little bit harder in response, which over time became harder and harder training. I went from once or twice a week to six times a week.

I started to not lose in the first round but not win anything overall, which helped my mental strength. The mental strength became a realisation that flicked a switch – ability wise it was always there but I couldn't bring it to competition. I used to mentally quit if somebody passed my guard or scored against me, or I'd get to the final and mentally settle for a silver.

I remember reaching the absolute final of the Nottingham Open and I was sick of not getting gold. I told myself to accept the fact that I would not quit in the next six minutes of my life. I would fight with 100% of my ability and that you are sacrificing all your effort for this one last fight. My attitude changed right there. Bad positions didn't matter anymore, I had confidence to fight back. My entire outlook changed.

I was that conditioned to losing that I wouldn't believe I deserved to be in the latter stages of the bracket. If they would get a point on me I would accept it because that's what I expected and I shouldn't have been that far anyway. I had to force myself to not quit, because the gold was what really mattered.

The mentality change has seen you on a tear up ever since and you recently secured a definite spot at the Europeans by winning the BJJ247 purple belt absolute package in Blackpool in a stacked division. So you've risen to the top as one of the best prospects in UK BJJ.

I think those things are hard to judge. When I looked at the division, I always thought I'm going to win otherwise what's the point of going. As for what other people thought, it's really hard to judge.

The term 'prospect' only really applies to other people's opinions. It's one of those things where I certainly don't think I stand out as a big dog on the UK circuit, like Bradley Hill for example. I know I'm not at his level but I always just aim to win competitions and hope everything else will fall into place – I hope it will pay off.

My aim is to win the World Championships at black belt and if that is in my future then I suppose I would be a prospect.

WORDS: TOM BELL

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PICTURES: FLAVIO SCORSATO

RAFA MENDES

AS A FIVE-TIME BLACK BELT WORLD CHAMPION, RAFAEL MENDES HAS FIRMLY SECURED HIS PLACE IN THE HISTORY BOOKS OF JIU JITSU, WITH MANY CITING HIM AS THE GREATEST FEATHERWEIGHT OF ALL TIME. DESPITE HIS ABSENCE FROM THE ADCC IN SAO PAULO, 2015 HAS BEEN A DOMINANT YEAR THAT SAW MENDES DECIMATE ALL-COMERS AT THE MUNDIALS. EVEN THE GREAT RUBENS CHARLES "COBRINHA" COULDN'T MOUNT ANY SORT OF THREAT TO AN INEVITABLE FIFTH TITLE FOR MENDES. IN THIS INTERVIEW RAFA TALKS IN DEPTH ABOUT HIS MOTIVATIONS, AMBITIONS, ASPIRATIONS AND LEGACY. THIS IS RAFAEL MENDES: IN CONVERSATION.

Many describe you as the greatest featherweight jiu jitsu fighter in history. How does it feel to be described as the best ever in your division?

I feel relieved. It's been my goal since I decided that I wanted to make jiu jitsu my career. I set this goal a long, long time ago and it took a lot of courage, faith and willpower to pull this off. In fact, to make something this special happen you need to search your heart, you have to go deep, deep down inside to find your true self. Once you get to really know yourself, you will then benefit from such a great endless development of knowledge. This is the only way you can dominate your body and mind to a level far beyond most people's understanding.

Your run at the 2015 Worlds was incredibly impressive. We believe no one scored even a single point against you? Do you feel like you're at the top of your game right now?

I believe that my approach to the Art of Jiu Jitsu is what keeps putting me ahead of the game. The majority of the players out there only see black and white, they don't see the big picture, they just want to fight. But my life experiences, my journey, my struggle in my childhood; growing up as the man of the house because of the absence of my father, travelling the whole world at the age of 18, getting to know so many different cultures has changed this for me. I have met amazing people, and some of them made a huge positive impact in my life. All of this played an important role in creating the person I am today. With all of these unforgettable experiences in my life, I became more sophisticated and able to expand my perception, my intelligence to a whole new level; I fell in love with art and its many different forms, and this is why I see jiu jitsu as an art, not a "fight." This approach gave me vision, it transformed my game; the way I move, how I react, and how I feel jiu jitsu. It forged me into a real artist of this craft.

You have fought against Cobrinha many times over the years and it has always been a war, so were you surprised at how dominant you were in the Worlds final this year?

Honestly, I surprise myself every time I compete. What surprises me over and over again is my ability to improvise; how fast my mind works to find a solution to a given problem, the ability to be creative when everything is happening in light speed, the ability to adjust to any situation under pressure and turn it in my favour. Deciding what to do in the blink of an eye, not overthinking and wasting the opportunity, but instead letting the body and mind work together and become one. So then, you are not actually thinking, but reacting and that is the real advantage. So I am not surprised at how dominant I was, I am surprised with how good I have become.

Five world titles at black belt is an amazing achievement for anyone. Now you've reached that benchmark, what are your goals going forward? Do you see Roger Gracie's record as something you'd like to reach?

As a competitor, I am still fired up and motivated to keep pushing forward, to break records, and continue inspiring people to better themselves and the lives of those around them.

As a Professor, my goal is not to only teach jiu jitsu, but to use it as a tool to build character and create better human beings. Jiu jitsu has changed my life and given me a strong and confident personality, so I truly believe in its ability to empower people and create life opportunities. I am a result of this life style; I have tasted this capacity for personal growth, so it is my desire to share it with the community.

As a businessman, my goal is to keep opening new doors, doing new things, with the mentality that we can always do it a little bit better, we can always improve.

The vision for AOJ was to offer world class instruction in a traditional but yet stylish environment that focused solely on jiu jitsu instead of following the popular

trend of being a Jiu Jitsu/MMA school. We saw the path that jiu jitsu was taking and it was not so bright. We realised that the way that jiu jitsu was being represented and introduced to its practitioners had lost its magic. We truly believe in the power of the environment, so we made sure to be a "school" and not a "fight club". We focus on education, instead of just fighting. We reach out to the whole family; sons and daughters, Moms and Dads, three year-old kids, people in their 60's; everyone.

When everyone was going right, we decided to go left. We had a vision; we believed in it, we loved it, and we took the risk. As a collaborative effort with our friend and mentor, RVCA founder PM Tenore, we opened AOJ on July 1st, 2012 and it changed the jiu jitsu industry.

Where would you say you've made the biggest improvements and innovations in your game in recent times?

In the mind. My techniques have evolved tremendously, but the mind-set that I have developed is the most powerful weapon that I have.

Looking back on all that you have achieved so far, what would you say is your standout memory as a competitor?

For sure it is the finals of the World Pro 2009 in Abu Dhabi. That night I was the underdog and fought an undefeated 4x World Champion, Cobrinha. I was an underdog to everyone except myself. In my mind, I was the big dog. In my heart, I felt I was there for a reason; to win, to make my dreams come true, and to become who I was born to be. That day I broke down the barriers of my mind; I fought him with the most intense desire I have ever felt, and since that day, I planted a seed in his mind. This would grow slowly but steadily, a seed that would keep me in his mind and every time we face each other it would make me more powerful and dominant over him.

On the other side of things, would you say that you have a standout memory of one of your worst experiences during your jiu jitsu career?

Losing is the worst experience and that is why I wake up every day and give my best and then I give a little bit more in everything that I do.

Now that your brother has retired from competitive jiu jitsu, do you feel like that brings added pressure onto your shoulders at all?

Not at all. In fact it is actually the opposite, I feel like I got a big elephant off of my shoulders [Laughs]. In a high pressure and stressful scenario like a competition, when you have a loved one or someone that you care about so much, a person that somehow is a part of you, when that person is on the line, it takes a lot of effort to control your emotions and keep things together. If you lose focus for a second it all falls apart.

So now being the only one at risk, gives me peace of mind.

Will you miss having Gui preparing for competitions alongside you as a competitor?

No I will not miss him, because he will still be there training with me and all the students day in day out. The only difference is that he will not sign up for the competition. I only see benefits from his decision; there is no down side. He will be able to focus more on me and the other competitors, helping us train smarter and improve faster. So it is a win/win situation.

You are still in your mid-twenties, but have you thought about the prospect of retiring from competitive jiu jitsu at all? What are your goals going forward?

It is not time to stop yet, not for me.

Honestly, for me it is not about the win anymore, winning as much as I did I don't think adding another title will change much. I know I already wrote my name in history and people will never forget it. But I am not ready to let go

"AS A COMPETITOR, I AM STILL FIRED UP AND MOTIVATED TO KEEP PUSHING FORWARD, TO BREAK RECORDS, AND CONTINUE INSPIRING PEOPLE TO BETTER THEMSELVES"

of my position, not yet. The thought of seeing someone in my position, a position that I conquered, in the first place of the podium, drives me crazy; it makes my heart race, it makes me lose sleep. I am not prepared for that yet, not ready to give it all away. I will one day, but not yet. If someone wants what I have, they will need to come after me, they will have to fight to take it from me, and one thing I promise; It will not be easy, it will be a hell of a fight.

You have worked extremely hard building up your academy since moving to the US, as well as developing Mendes Bros Online. We assume you've had to work hard on developing your skills in business. Have you had much help in this department?

One thing that really fascinates me is the human being's ability to learn. We can strive to be great at anything, and of course we have to be fully passionate about it. Since we opened AOJ, I have found a new love. Learning business is just as interesting and fun as it is to learn jiu jitsu.

It is dynamic and exciting, a whole new world of experiences. In a short period of time I have learned a new language, learned about marketing, finance, customer service, how to use technology to expand our potential, and much more. All of this without vision will get you nowhere, and vision can't be bought, it needs to come from the inside. It is a product of the marriage of your personality and your dream. It is genuine; it is generated by passion, by a deep love.

Another thing that you have to do is to recognize great people, great minds, and give them the right value. The business has to be run by ideas, you have to trust those people and give them the opportunity to express their vision and not hold them back. You have to believe that each individual will hold up their end of the deal and they will solve their part of the puzzle. It is a bond that is created by trust and respect. Once everyone involved is in the loop, everything will fall in place.

I finished high school and never went to college because I was doing jiu jitsu full time. But since I met PM Tenore, I can say that I have a Professor, a mentor. Pat is an interesting person; when you first meet him you will think that he is crazy (maybe he is, just a little, haha). But once you really get to know him, you will discover that he has a brilliant mind, is extremely smart, and is one of the most caring people I have ever met in my life. He created his brand (RVCA) from the ground up. It started in his garage with nothing but a dream and a vision; he believed and achieved. I admire him because his experience is real and nothing was given to him. He worked for it; everything was earned, started from the bottom and ended up on top. Having a successful businessman like him to learn from is priceless. But having him as family is much more special.

For our readers who may not know, tell us a little about how you first met Pat Tenore and how he has helped you guys through your career with your move to the US?

We met Pat in 2007 when we first came to the United States. Gui, myself, and a bunch of Brazilians were training at a friend's academy the week before Worlds. The academy was packed and this friend of ours who also knew Pat invited him to come check it out and train. Pat was brown belt at that time. I remember Pat came to the academy, but he would not roll with anybody. Probably thinking 'these crazy Brazilian guys will try to kill me', hahaha. But he saw me and Gui, two skinny purple belt teenagers, and said 'I will just have fun with those kids'. Now I can tell you that what he experienced was not fun at all, hahaha. Afterwards, he was amazed by our style and techniques and he invited us to go visit RVCA. That was when we realized who he was.

This story tells the beginning of a sponsorship that became friendship, and after many years of respect and trust, it became brotherhood and a family. Pat has helped and believed in us since day one. When we got our black belts, he told us that if we could both win worlds in the black belt division, he would do everything necessary to help us fulfill our dream of moving to America and opening up a professional school. We held up our end of the deal, and Pat held up his end of the deal as well.

There are countless jiu jitsu athletes and teachers struggling to make a living through a sport which is still not "professional". What advice would you give these people to help them achieve their goals of making a living through jiu jitsu?

I agree that it is not easy to make a living through jiu jitsu, or any other sport; in fact it is not easy in any business. In the real world, nothing comes easy, you have to battle for every single thing that you want to accomplish. This daily challenge makes everything more special. It creates that amazing "mission accomplished" feeling every time your goal is reached. I think today we live in a world where people believe everything we

"I FOLLOW A PRINCIPLE THAT GIVES ME BALANCE IN LIFE AND HELPS ME MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE WHEN I FACE DIFFICULT DECISIONS; I PUT GOD FIRST, FOLLOWED BY FAMILY, AND THEN WORK"

want should be given to us, and it should be given fast. Whenever we decide we want it, we should get it. We don't like waiting, and we don't like a "no" as an answer. The fact is, this culture blinds us from the reality. Instead of taking responsibility for our behaviour and daily decisions, we try to blame it on something or someone else, when the truth is we can only blame ourselves for letting our mind and our life get trapped in this storm of negativity. So right now, for the person reading this looking for advice, the best thing I can say is that you are the solution, you are the change, and you have the power to turn the tables and make it happen. The problem is not the sport, and it is not the organisations.

I was born and raised in Brazil, I grew up on the mats doing jiu jitsu. When I was 18, I began traveling across the world competing and visiting different jiu jitsu academies. After visiting so many different academies, I felt there was a void in the industry. The jiu jitsu community needed something different, something more organised, more professional; that is how we found the secret formula to create AOJ. We had an idea of what we had to do, we had the experience, but what we had mastered of all of the details was what we could not do when opening and running our own school. So if you want to help the sport to grow, you have to become a better athlete, a better representative of our art, a better Professor, a better school owner, and a better business man.

This is my advice for you. If you want to make a living through jiu jitsu be organised, be professional, be positive, be focused, be mature, be energetic, be the difference.

This is what we, the Mendes Brothers and AOJ are doing. We have set the bar so high that everybody else is playing catch up, and this is affecting the whole industry. In a short period of time, we will see a huge improvement in the quality of the jiu jitsu business, whether it is seminars, schools, or how athletes conduct themselves and their careers. We are not only working for our personal growth or AOJ's growth, but for jiu jitsu as a whole. I love this verse from the Bible: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2

What would you say are the toughest challenges you have faced since moving to the USA? This could be in business, your personal life or in your jiu jitsu training.

The biggest challenge in the beginning certainly was to find the balance between family, work, and competitions. Without balance, things will start to fall apart, and we did feel overwhelmed. 2013 was not the best year for us, and it was a wake-up call. But we are fast learners, we studied the situation, we carefully analysed every aspect of it. And in a moment, just like magic, our life changed again, we found its balance, and since then we have experienced happiness every single day.

How did becoming a father affect your jiu jitsu life?

Becoming a father is the best thing that ever happened to me. I would give up everything for my son if I had to; any title, any position, anything that I own. Since the day he was born life has been more interesting, happier, selfless, meaningful; life is better! So if my life is better, effectively everything that I do becomes better.

You have a huge number of kids now training at AOJ, so what advice would you give to people on how to teach kids as opposed to adults?

Kids are pure and they have an incredible perception. If you really care about them, if you love them, they will love you back, and that is a great start. On a more specific note, each kid has a different personality. You have to be very sensitive, and make sure you do the right thing when approaching each one of them.

Are you disappointed not to have competed at the ADCC this year? Is that an event that you want to focus on more in the future?

I follow a principle that gives me balance in life and helps me make the right choice when I face difficult decisions; I put God first, followed by family, and then work. My wife is pregnant with our second baby that will be born in October. This is a very special moment in our lives, and I do not want to miss any second of it. So when I had to decide either if I was going to compete or not, I followed my principles and the decision was clear. I look forward to winning ADCC once again.

"I FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL AND NEVER WENT TO COLLEGE BECAUSE I WAS DOING JIU JITSU FULL TIME. BUT SINCE I MET PM TENORE, I CAN SAY THAT I HAVE A PROFESSOR, A MENTOR"

Art of Jiu Jitsu Online has become one of the most popular online training platforms on the market. Whose idea was it to get that started and how difficult was it to launch?

The website was an idea that me and Gui had long time ago. When we were still living in Brazil, we developed a style called "Modern Jiu Jitsu" and it was our desire to create a platform where we could share our innovation of techniques with the world. We had everything outlined, but when it came time to deal with web developers, we struggled. We jumped from one company to another, and cost us time. We moved to California in January of 2012, and it took us six months to build AOJ and prepare for its grand opening. Just like if destiny was conspiring in our favour, the website was ready for its launch around the same date. After exploring the benefits of technology, we started something that would soon become a strong and successful business and a very important tool to reach out to people all around the world and expand jiu jitsu globally.

Do you watch much jiu jitsu content online yourself?

I do not. Not because I have something against it, I really think that it is extremely important to study your opponent. When you know yourself and you also know your enemy, you don't need to fear what is to come. But since I was blue belt, I have focused my energy on Cobrinha, as he was already black belt world champion. I realised that I did not want to watch his fights because he was winning everything. He was much better than everybody else, and I did not want to watch him winning over and over. I would become a fan and I knew that was the worst thing that could happen to me. My mind would see him as a giant, as a hero; but I was smart enough to not get caught up in this mysterious trick of the mind.

Gui was always there for me and we knew that he would not be fighting in Cobrinha's division. Since the early days, he has always studied Cobrinha very carefully, how he moves, and how he behaves, and where he has weaknesses. Gui has always been my secret weapon in this battle; he has found the map to the treasure.

Obviously you have nothing to prove, but do you ever feel compelled to fight in the open weight divisions? We remember you pushing Rodolfo Vieira very close in a nogi WPJJC final in Abu Dhabi a few years back!

I can't say that I will never fight in the open weight division, but I do not have any desire to do it. I fought the open class division many times in the past, but it is the past. I was investing in the process of promoting my name, with the goal to put the Mendes Brothers in the spotlight. I have accomplished that, so as long as I am happy, like you said there is no need to prove anything more. Jiu jitsu spectators can always go online and check many of the videos that we have on artofjiujitsu.com sparring open class style with some high level athletes.

As a lighter fighter, do you put any limitations on the size of people you will roll with? Do you think lighter guys shouldn't spar with guys that are too heavy?

I have never put any limitations when it comes to training or anything that I have decided to do. I find great pleasure in breaking the barriers of limitations. I think it is important to train with everybody, because by doing so you will experience a variety of information that will benefit you with the priceless opportunity to grow. Of course the majority of the preparation will be done with training partners that are close in size and skill, because we are attempting to recreate the competition environment in the most realistic form possible.

Tell us something that most people don't know about Rafa Mendes?

I am very "OCD". Everything needs to be just perfect; things can't be "all right" or "ok", it has to be exactly how I visualise it in my mind. I am a perfectionist. I remember when I was a kid, my mom would be away working and I would get home after school and clean every inch of the house. She never understood why I liked to clean and organise so much, neither did I. Being OCD is good for me, maybe this plays a part of how my jiu jitsu became so technical, and it also has a big influence on how I run the business.

Thanks so much for your time Rafa! Is there anyone else you'd like to thank or mention?

In this interview I have opened my heart and mind sharing ideas, experiences and emotions never shared before. I would like to dedicate it to Renata - a lovely, charismatic and kind wife and mother.

CARLSON'S LION

MASTER CARLSON GRACIE WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED AS ONE OF THE FINEST JIU JITSU FIGHTERS IN HISTORY. HIS AGGRESSIVE, DOMINATING STYLE WAS UNIQUE FOR HIS GENERATION, AND HIS SUCCESSES ON THE TATAMI LED TO THE FORMATION OF PERHAPS THE MOST FAMOUS ACADEMY IN RIO: CARLSON GRACIE ACADEMY. IT WAS WITHIN HIS ACADEMY THAT MASTER CARLSON WENT ABOUT REARING CHAMPIONS – AND BOY DID HE REAR HIS FAIR SHARE. THOUGH THE LIKES OF VITOR BELFORT AND WALLID ISMAIL ARE PERHAPS MORE FAMILIAR TO FANS OUTSIDE OF BRAZIL, IT WAS ANOTHER STUDENT THAT PAVED HIS WAY AS CARLSON'S MOST EXEMPLARY PUPIL – HIS NAME IS AMAURY BITETTI.

Quite simply, Bitetti is thought by many to be the greatest jiu jitsu fighter to have ever competed. Praise indeed when you consider his lineage and the flock of now legendary athletes he faced during his career. Having started training at the tender age of five, and quickly finding his feet at competitions, it was only a matter of time before Bitetti started to shine. When entering the Carlson Gracie Academy in Rio you will see a vast number of trophies displayed on shelves around the walls, and you can bet your bottom dollar Amaury played his part in winning many of them.

The history books reveal Amaury's most notable achievement in that he was the first man to be crowned absolute black belt World Champion in 1996, a feat he then repeated the following year.

"Winning the first and second absolute titles at the Mundials is something that no one can take from me and it makes me very proud to this day," beams Bitetti. "I remember in particular my final from 1997 against Fabio Gurgel. Fabio and I had many tough battles, many wars, and he was one of the best fighters of his time. I also beat Alexandre Paiva and Royler Gracie on the way to the final, so it was amazing to face two legends on that day.

"I appreciate all the things I achieved in jiu jitsu, it's my history. I look back at my career as a fighter and I understand it made me who I am, and it also opened doors for my lifestyle and what I do now."

Following in the footsteps of his Master, Amaury was known for his aggressive, pressure-based style of fighting. Having studied judo alongside jiu jitsu from an early age, he possessed a rock solid base and an array of devastating throws. Such were his talents as a competitor, Bitetti went on an almost unthinkable winning streak as a black belt.

"You know, I went 11 years undefeated in jiu jitsu - no one beat me in my weight or the absolute division at black belt," says Amaury. "In fact, no one even scored a single point on me in 11 years. I feel this is a great achievement considering the guys I was fighting. I had battles with the best guys, including people like Ryan Gracie."

With such an unbelievable record as a fighter, you can start to see why Bitetti is rightly considered jiu jitsu royalty in his native Brazil. Though natural talent undoubtedly played a part, there's no denying that his successes were the direct result of hard work, expert tutelage and the toughest bunch of training partners you could ever imagine. "I believe it was the best team of all time," says Amaury on his teammates. "I trained with guys like Ricardo Liborio, Murilo Bustamante, Wallid Ismail, Mario Sperry and Cassio Cardoso – there's never been a better group of fighters in one place."

It was exactly this group of students that earned Master Carlson's academy a reputation as the toughest place to train in Rio. There are countless stories and anecdotes surrounding the Carlson Gracie Academy during the '90s, most of which cite the intensity of the training conducted by the fighters.

"It was "real" training, that's the best way to talk about it," explains Amaury. "In a gym full of tough guys, you have to train properly, so that's what we did every single day. It makes you who you are.

"For me, that time of my life was an honour. When a jiu jitsu fighter trains with Carlson Gracie, they gain a true understanding of what makes the spirit of a warrior."

As the saying goes: 'all good things come to an end', and the group of teammates at Carlson Gracie Academy eventually fragmented. Carlson's student, Vitor Belfort, was picking up huge momentum on the MMA scene, which led to both him and his Master moving to the USA. With Carlson now away from the academy, many students opted to leave and follow their own paths.

"The guys that left the academy had their point of view on things, but me and Wallid thought different – we stayed," says Amaury on Carlson's and Victor's move to the USA. "Vitor Belfort was my student, did you know that? I don't mean to sound arrogant, but I was the number one student of Carlson Gracie in jiu jitsu."

For Bitetti, the absence of his Master did not mark the end of their association, but it did mark the start of a new relationship: "I talked with Carlson about it all when it happened and I decided to also train with Osvaldo Alves, because at that time Osvaldo didn't have any students. He was a top class head coach in jiu jitsu, judo and MMA, but he had no students. So yeah, I talked with Carlson and he said 'ok, no problem'. I continued to train with both Carlson and Osvaldo.

"I actually trained with Sergio Penha in Osvaldo's gym as well. It was actually Sergio that told me to come and train with Osvaldo, and I knew he was considered a top class teacher."

As a red belt, Osvaldo Alves is another jiu jitsu pioneer whose heritage in the sport speaks for itself. As well as helping cultivate new philosophies

"I WENT 11 YEARS UNDEFEATED IN JIU JITSU – NO ONE BEAT ME IN MY WEIGHT OR THE ABSOLUTE DIVISION AT BLACK BELT"

WORDS AND PICTURES: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

AMAURY BITETTI

"VITOR BELFORT WAS MY STUDENT, DID YOU KNOW THAT? I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND ARROGANT, BUT I WAS THE NUMBER ONE STUDENT OF CARLSON GRACIE IN JIU JITSU"

and techniques within the sport, he taught the likes of Rolls Gracie, Fredson Paixao and, of course, Amaury Bitetti.

"I guess they had very similar skills in jiu jitsu, they were both very talented," explains Amaury. "I think Osvaldo was able to explain to you with more detail some of his positions. At the end of the day though, Carlson made warriors, and he was considered my true head coach."

As with many jiu jitsu representatives of his generation, it wasn't long before Bitetti looked to test his skills in MMA. Having been a champion boxer in Rio, as well as constantly working his judo alongside jiu jitsu, it came as no surprise to see him make a successful transition from mat to cage.

"I started MMA because I wanted to prove my jiu jitsu was very good," says Amaury. "I have always felt that MMA was a natural option for me. Actually, MMA was my favourite form of competition. I love jiu jitsu and have many amazing memories, but MMA was always my favourite form of competition. Of course, I always root for the jiu jitsu guys when they fight MMA. I think jiu jitsu is 70% of MMA."

Testament to his heart and desire to fight the best opponents possible, Bitetti soon found himself signed to fight in the UFC: "You know, in MMA and the UFC, I never fought against a guy that was the same size as me. Never. I fought Don Frye, who was a champion at the time and at least 20kg heavier than me - he was an excellent fighter. Then I fought against Alex Andrade, and once again I was lighter by about 20kg [laughs].

"I also had a fight against Dennis Hallman after that, which no one really knows about. The event was called *Shogun*, and just like the UFC, Zuffa owned it. I beat Dennis in five rounds on that show in Hawaii. That was the year that Dennis Hallman beat Matt Hughes twice, so I was happy with that victory."

It was after this victory over Dennis Hallman in 2001 that Amaury decided it was time to hang up the gloves, but his involvement in MMA was far from over. Just a year after his final professional fight, Amaury formed his own MMA organisation in Brazil – Bitetti Combat.

"Because I love MMA, I have carried on working as a promoter," says Amaury. "The show is called *Bitetti Combat*, and it's the biggest MMA promotion in Brazil now. Lots of our fighters go on to compete in the UFC actually. I'm like the Dana White for the promotion [laughs].

"From the early days, I had a notion that MMA was set to be big, but no one could have predicted just how big it would become around the world. I guess I was born in the wrong era as a fighter, but I enjoy working now as a promoter."

If exploits as a promoter in Brazil were not enough, Amaury also coaches the famed MMA fighters and brothers, Rodrigo and Rogério 'Minotauro' Nogueira. "We work very hard sessions with them, and their physical preparation is also very intense," says Bitetti on the Nogueira brothers' training. "They are great fighters and athletes, so it is a pleasure to work with them."

With a clear passion for combat and a near perfect record as a competitor, Bitetti was labelled "Fighter of the '90s" by many mainstream press outlets in Brazil. He was forged by a generation of warriors focused on takedowns, guard passes, submissions and defence against strikes. BJJ is a constantly evolving art, which is one of its true beauties. However, new techniques, new styles and new rules have seen the rise of double guard pulls, berimbolos and the term 'sport jiu jitsu'. For Bitetti and his teammates jiu jitsu simply meant, 'fighting', but it's refreshing to hear his openness to innovation.

"I like it, I like it," says Amaury on the evolution of BJJ. "Change can be really good, so new movements and techniques are very important. That said, I'm from a certain generation, so I like pressure games and I guess what people call 'old school' techniques.

"You know, I think Carlson would say the same. I think Carlson would still like the way jiu jitsu has developed and be happy with what we call jiu jitsu today. But, he would prefer the old style, the pressure style, that's for sure – no doubt. He was from the old school and we all know how Carlson used to fight."

As a promoter and coach, Amaury is now more immersed in the world of MMA than jiu jitsu, but his legacy as a grappler stays strong. Though sometimes outshone by Vitor Belfort and his high profile split from the team, jiu jitsu fans will remember Amaury Bitetti as Carlson Gracie's number one student – his champion.

"I really appreciate all the Professors that have opened up their academy doors to me while I've been in Europe," says Bitetti in closing. "It has been an amazing experience and I've had so much fun teaching and meeting new people. A special thanks goes to Wilson Junior and Dickie Martin from Carlson Gracie London, and also thanks to Roger Gracie for hosting me at his academy. A final thanks to Carlson Gracie Jr."

Nick Brooks (Black Elite)
IBJJF European Champion 2013
NAGA European Champion 2012
Dickie Martin (Black Leve)
Masters World Champion 2014
Heavyweight and Openweight
Sam Gibson (Blue Leve)
English Champion 2013 & 2014
British Champion 2013 & 2014
European No-Gi Champion 2013
Lee Renaut (Superlight)
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NEW BREED

Brazilian jiu jitsu's increased popularity has enabled a new wave of athletes to burst onto the competition scene. These athletes are coming from all over the globe and are starting to make names for themselves at a very young age. Kids like Kade and Tye Ruotolo from Art of Jiu Jitsu, Roberto Jimenez out of Alliance, and many others like them, who grew up on the mats and have been training for nearly as long as they've been walking, come to mind when discussing the future of our sport. Michael 'Mikey' Musumeci is spearheading this wave of next generation athletes who grew up on jiu jitsu and are taking the competition scene by storm.

The 19-year-old wunderkind began training at the age of four, and already has a lifetime's worth of hours spent on the mats accumulating knowledge and perfecting his technique. Mikey is already making a name for himself at the highest level of competition after just one tournament as a black belt, where he stunned the world by upsetting Joao Miyao at the 2015 American Nationals. Mikey might be part of this new and exciting generation of lifelong Brazilian jiu jitsu athletes that will ensure jiu jitsu has a bright tomorrow, but for Musumeci the future is now. *Jiu Jitsu Style* caught up with the next big name in Brazilian jiu jitsu and discussed his experience growing up as a lifelong Brazilian jiu jitsu practitioner; this is his story.

EAT. SLEEP. TRAIN.

To most people who put on a gi, "Eat, Sleep, Train" is a clichéd slogan that has been popularised by BJJ brands and plastered on motivational memes shared on social media. Not for Mikey Musumeci. "Eat, Sleep, Train" has pretty much been his way of life since he can remember. The New Jersey native fell in love with the art while barely out of diapers after watching his father go to a jiu jitsu class. He recalls, "My dad was always into MMA and he loved fighting. I saw him training and I was like, 'Wow, I want to train,' then I started training consistently and [my sister and I] stuck to it."

Mikey and his sister Tammi, who is his main training partner, began learning the gentle art alongside their father, who is a blue belt, and began competing at a very young age. While Mikey's father didn't earn a black belt, he has been instrumental in supporting both of the Musumeci siblings' progression as martial artists and elite competitors. As Mikey and his sister got older their interest and dedication to training intensified, and once they got a taste for competition, they made it their common goal to succeed at the highest level.

Growing up, Mikey had to move often because of his father's work. He began training in New Jersey, but moved around different cities in Florida until settling in Boca Raton. While moving around as much as he did may have impeded Mikey from developing the type of consistent mentor relationship with an instructor that many in the jiu jitsu community consider ideal, it enabled him to become exposed to a multitude of styles and training partners. At every new city, the Musumecis sought out the best training available, and Mikey got to develop under a literal who's who of Brazilian jiu jitsu world champions, like Bruno Malfacine, Gilbert 'Durinho' Burns, and Gui Mendes to name a few.

Obsessed with improving, Mikey picked up the habits of his elite coaches and training partners and became a consummate professional when it came to dedication to training and improving as a martial artist. When discussing his training regime Musumeci noted, "I like to train three times a day, about an hour to an hour and a half each time, it depends, but I also like to rest a lot. I rest more than a lot of the people that I'm fighting. I know [the Miyaos are] training like eight times a day, and I know other people who train like five or six times a day. How do their bodies deal with that? If I train more than three times a day my body is dead."

Musumeci doesn't like training more than three times a day, and his focus is primarily on drilling to perfect the technique he must rely on, only being 5'7" and walking around at less than the 141 lb weight limit for the division he usually competes in. He only spars three times a week and also incorporates strength and conditioning into his regime. "For conditioning, I lift weights twice a week. I feel like when I do more my body is in too much pain. [I do strength and conditioning] just to compliment jiu jitsu. I bench press and do just normal weight lifting. I also like to do more physical therapy stuff, so I last longer in jiu jitsu. Injury prevention stuff I feel is really important. For cardio, sometimes I like to swim, sometimes I run; it just depends," said Musumeci. "Eat, Sleep, Train" indeed seems to be engrained in Mikey Musumeci's core.

"HONESTLY, MAN, THE WHOLE FIGHT WITH [MIYAO], THE WHOLE FIGHT, I WAS GOING FOR HIS ANKLES HARD. I MEAN, IS IT MY FAULT THAT HIS JOINTS ARE MADE OF RUBBER?"

MIKEY MUSUMECI

19 YEARS OF AGE AND 15 YEARS DEEP IN THE GAME

Traditionally, a student should not receive their black belt in Brazilian jiu jitsu before the age of 18. To see a black belt of this age is a rarity – an exception rather than the norm. Mikey Musumeci received his black belt from Gilbert 'Durinho' Burns and Jonatas Gurgel at the age of 18. Although this may seem young to some, what most people don't realise is that before earning his black belt he'd already been training for 14 years. If it takes the average student 10 years to earn a black belt, Mikey already had four extra years of training before his last promotion.

Musumeci came up through the kids' system, eventually earning a black belt for children, which he described as "useless." He earned his blue belt under Emyr 'Shark' Bussade at 13, and nearly four years later he received his purple belt from Javill Byron. Gui Mendes gave him his brown belt a year later, and he continued this trend by receiving his black belt twelve months later from Burns and Gurgel.

Although each belt held its own specific challenges, for Mikey the hardest belt to get through was the juvenile blue belt. "It was the hardest because I was a late bloomer with puberty so I was really weak. Everyone was stronger than me and I was really light. So it was really tough for me and I only had pure technique. When I got stronger is when my jiu jitsu got really good. I was able to use my technique more instead of getting overpowered. I started competing in juvenile with the 16 and 17 year olds when I was only 13. I won some matches but I would lose matches. I was only 80 lb and I was fighting in the 118 lb divisions. The kids were almost 30 pounds heavier than me and they were strong, they went through puberty and I was so weak at the time. From 15 on I started winning everything, the tournaments, I got stronger and started doing a lot of conditioning. I was weaker so I worked really hard with conditioning to get really strong and now I'm strong," said Musumeci.

After 14 years of dedication to training Mikey achieved what most of us who train BJJ aspire to earn one day. When describing his path to the black belt, Musumeci noted, "I had just won the 2015 brown belt Worlds, I was all happy I won. Durinho was there; he came to coach and we both agreed it was time to get my black belt and Jonatas also agreed, so we did it. I got promoted on the podium three years in a row. 2013, 2014 and 2015: 2013 I got purple, 2014 I got brown, and 2015 I got the black belt. So I wanted to keep the trend going. I just wanted to get the black belt so bad because I grew up watching those guys and now I get to be with them. It's so exciting!" Now that Mikey is a black belt he will be facing the people he once idolised and patterned his game after, and he has already begun doing so with eye-opening success.

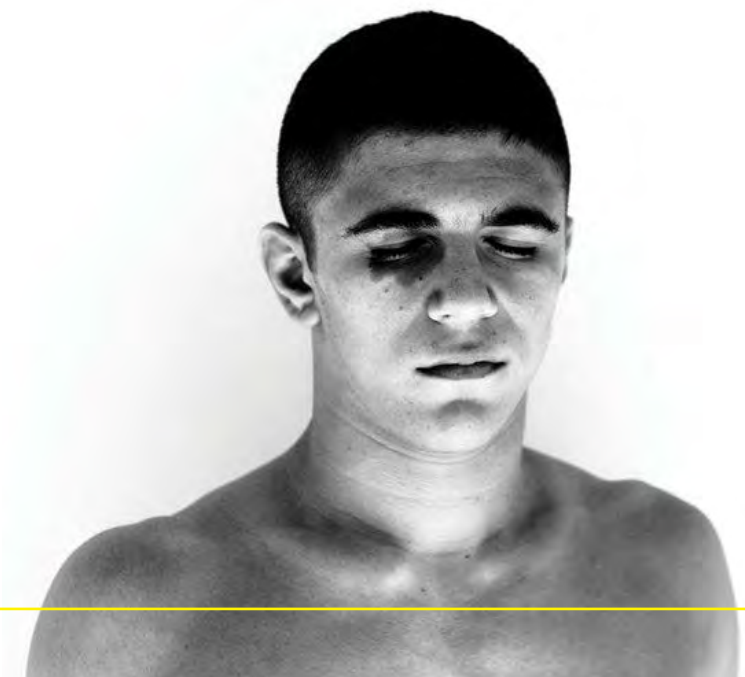
FIGHTING GIANTS

In martial arts competition, elite athletes burst onto the scene and gain notoriety either by winning at the highest levels, impressing in defeat or upsetting a favourite. For example, Garry Tonon and Eddie Bravo made their names, to an extent, after their matches with Royler and Kron Gracie. Tonon gained a slew of new fans after losing to Kron, and Eddie Bravo stepped into the limelight after his rousing upset of Royler.

Mikey Musumeci made his name off Joao Miyao. Although he doesn't want to be known as 'The guy who beat Joao,' it cannot be argued that if you didn't know him before this win, you certainly would now. Miyao and Musumeci met at the finals for their 2015 American Nationals division, Mikey's first competition as a black belt. Miyao was the firm favourite, and ended up losing to Musumeci by five advantages. Mikey shocked all who watched the fight by nearly taking the back of the notoriously hard to pass Miyao at the very beginning of the fight. Musumeci described the experience, "I froze in the moment I got the twister arm in and I was in shock. I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm here,' and I remember a gap of time and then I was in another position and I kind of went blank. I was kind of star struck because he is such an idol to me, but I gotta work on that."

If you ask Mikey, the win against Joao Miyao is only a starting point for bigger things to come. He understands that the people he grew up idolising and watching on the mats are now his peers. The men he once idolised are now in the way of his ultimate goal of becoming a black belt World Champion. There was no hesitation in his voice when explaining his plans for the future.

"I'M FOCUSING MAINLY ON NEXT YEAR BECAUSE I'M GONNA WIN BLACK BELT WORLDS NEXT YEAR. HOPEFULLY. GOD WILLING"



"Right now I'm just focusing on fixing up any injuries I have on my body. It's been a long year of competing and sometimes when you compete so much you lose that drive, and I just want to make sure I feel physically better. I'm focusing on that right now and we'll see what opportunities come up for me to fight this year. I'm focusing mainly on next year because I'm gonna win black belt Worlds next year. Hopefully. God willing." If his maiden voyage as a black belt competitor is any indication of what the future holds for Musumeci, his competitors would do best by taking him as a very serious threat.

THE BERIMBOLO AND TAKING THE BACK

Mikey is a cerebral fighter; he believes that taking the back is the easiest way to submit your opponent, and the position with the biggest likelihood to gain points from. He is aware that it doesn't always make for the most exciting fights, but he doesn't care. The kid just wants to win. When discussing his critics, Musumeci noted, "Yeah people say 'Oh, he only knows berimbolo,' but I've done so many years of jiu jitsu without knowing the berimbolo, or being interested in what any fancy jiu jitsu even was. That's my best way to win fights; the reason why berimbolo is good in [sport] jiu jitsu is, obviously, self-defence; you wouldn't want to get killed, but it takes you into the back and the back is where you finish. I feel like that's one of the best places to finish the fight so that's why it's really good. The problem with berimbolo is when [there are] two guys who are really high level it can become a stalemate."

Musumeci points to his recent victory over Joao Miyao to illustrate his point on the berimbolo's effectiveness despite its lack of excitement at times. "My opinion on the berimbolo is, yes, it can be boring, like when I fought Miyao, that was a boring fight because it was so neutral in that berimbolo aspect, even though I came close in the beginning to taking the back. The berimbolo leads to the back, which is the superior position to finish people, so arguably it's a really good positon in jiu jitsu. The back is the best for points and it leads to the finish. The problem is when you fight someone really good it's going to be a boring fight. So my opinion is that you have to have more things to do than berimbolo. For example, if I can't berimbolo someone I should be able to come up and pass their guard."

Mikey's fight IQ and sheer desire to win steer him towards making smart choices that are low risk and high reward. He will adapt to the frame of mind required for each rule set and aggressively pursue the finish if competing under a submission only format, but if all he needs is points he will not risk losing for the sake of being entertaining. He noted of his use of berimbolo stalemates like his fight against Miyao, "I should be able to do something else to keep the fight going. With that being said, in a point based thing, if I'm winning, what drive is there for me to do that? If it's submission only that's one thing, maybe they can make it submission only to force me to do that, but if it isn't submission only and I'm winning why would I reverse your position if I'm winning? I was up by four or five [advantages against Miyao], why would I go up and risk getting caught or getting my back taken and try to go crazy passing his guard if I'm winning the fight? Maybe if they wanted to make it submission only then that would change the whole fight and I wouldn't be thinking about the advantages."

Even though his fight against Miyao didn't match the intensity of Buchecha and Rodolfo ,or the pace of Dern versus Nicolini, Musumeci wants readers to know that it wasn't due to his lack of trying. "Honestly, man, the whole fight with [Miyao], the whole fight, I was going for his ankles hard. I mean, is it my fault that his joints are made of rubber? I was going hard for his joints; I was bending his ankles, I was bending his knees. The whole fight all he did was go for my back, the whole fight all I did was attack his joints. If you watch the fight, most of the fight I'm attacking his ankle, I'm attacking his knee. I can't help that his joints are rubber. It felt like I lost a fight after losing that back take in the beginning. I was really upset about that. With that being said, I was going for the finish the whole time so if you want to critique me for going for the finish then let the people critique me. He was going for my back the whole time, he wasn't going for the finish," said Musumeci.

NOTHING BUT UPSIDE

Mikey Musumeci is a star on the rise. The newly promoted black belt is planning big things on and off the mats. He recently finished high school and will be enrolling into university to pursue a degree in medicine on a full academic scholarship. He doesn't plan on taking a break from training while studying to become a doctor. He is determined to succeed at the highest levels of competition while enrolling in a very rigorous academic program. Brazilian jiu jitsu has conditioned him to be fearless, and he is mature beyond his 19 years. He has the ambition, intelligence, and work ethic to succeed at both endeavours if he sets his mind to it – and if we are to judge by his track record so far, it's safe to say that when articles about Mikey are written in the future he will be referred to as 'Dr. Michael Musumeci, World Champion Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Black Belt.'

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CARLSON GRACIE

GEDDES HAS BEEN GLOBETROTTING...

I am writing this article from the living room of my temporary apartment in Leuven, a small town in Belgium a short distance outside Brussels. Why am I here? Because I am instructing (and learning) at the BJJ Globetrotters Summer Camp taking place in town - an influx of over 200 jiu jitsu practitioners from all over the world spending a week training, learning and sharing their love of jiu jitsu.

For those who are unfamiliar with the BJJ Globetrotters, it is a team founded by Danish black belt, Christian Graugart, with the somewhat contradictory intention of breaking down the barriers of politics and team rivalries and encouraging all students of the art to train wherever they want and with whomever they want. As of today, they have just shy of 200 affiliated academies listed on their website, so obviously there is some degree of support for this mission statement. Also, as there are no affiliation fees (standard for most large associations), it is often the team of choice for smaller academies with lower-belted instructors who wish to have a team to compete under for the more structured International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) events, as well as to eventually earn their own belts under.

My first experience with the Globetrotters organisation was when I was invited to teach at one of their earlier camps held in Copenhagen, but the calendar and schedule of events has just kept expanding since then, with the addition of a skiing and snowboarding camp in Austria, a surfing camp in El Salvador - in short, if there's a fun activity out there that can also be combined with jiu jitsu, they've already done it or are planning on doing it in the future. Even my first, relatively local event, finished with an MMA show, with several of the fighters on the card actually being camp attendees who had decided they were interested in taking part, as well as a selection of gloriously silly novelty matches.

Enough of the history - although the camp itself isn't quite finished up at the time of writing, here's a little bit of an update on what's been on the menu so far: luta livre, judo and wrestling classes all taught by experts in their respective fields, as well as jiu jitsu classes run by instructors from Checkmat, Carlson Gracie Team, Brasa and many others. Every instructor has brought at least one thing to the table that I haven't seen before (for the stand up classes, significantly more!), and it's always interesting to see the same positions being approached in numerous different ways by multiple instructors over the course of several days. The classes themselves are approximately an hour apiece so a huge amount of material is being covered every day, and there are additional open mat sessions where wandering instructors are available to answer questions on anything the camp attendees might want to ask about, or to simply roll.

The number of students in any given class can vary drastically - with up to seven hours of instruction every day, and the additional open mat time, it would be almost impossible to attend every class. It is probably not entirely a coincidence that the earlier classes are relatively sparse as students continue to roll in for 2pm or sometimes even later, often looking somewhat the worse for wear. In a way, that's the beauty of the camp - it can be whatever you make of it, and different for everyone. Some people see it as an opportunity to combine a holiday with their hobby, some people are looking for instruction from experienced coaches outside of their own team, some simply want to roll as much as possible with new training partners, new body types and new styles that they are simply not exposed to in the course of normal training.

Not all of the time is spent on the mat, however. Once everyone has escaped the sweatbox of a gym, and the gis and rashguards have been thrown in the laundry, most of the guests choose to hit the town and see what else there is to offer apart from rolling around on mats in either pyjamas or spandex. With a camp this large (and, admittedly, a town this small), it's likely that any evening trip will lead to crossing paths with at least one fellow camp attendee, with those odds going up substantially when approaching some of the higher quality hamburger and steak restaurants in town. Social media lets everyone stay in touch, and even though arranging any specific meeting points is rather like herding cats, paths end up being crossed, connections end up being made, and it all works out in the end.

"I FIT MY SCHEDULE AROUND THESE CAMPS - IT'S NOT ABOUT JUST TRAINING JIU JITSU, IT'S ABOUT USING JIU JITSU AS A MEANS TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER"

Even with so much going on, the week has gone by ridiculously quickly, but the most interesting thing I've noticed in previous camps is that the connections you make during them persist afterwards. Maybe now people have a reason to visit a certain country and their new friends there, or maybe it's just refreshing to see the same faces pop up at the next camp - and the fact that the same faces do keep showing up is, again, a sign that they can't be doing all that much wrong.

Tomorrow is the final day, and that will feature a grading, a final epic open mat that will give everyone a chance to work off any remnants of energy they may have (and the final opportunity for some of the attendees to try to hunt down and scalp a black belt or two) and then the after party that will bring the week to an end. On Sunday everyone will disperse back to their own countries and their own clubs, bringing with them new techniques, new memories and new experiences. For me, at least, that's a lot of what jiu jitsu should be about, and it's why, whenever I'm able to, I fit my schedule around these camps - it's not about just training jiu jitsu, it's about using jiu jitsu as a means to bring people together as well as to bring people out of their comfort zones, as we all had to when we first stepped onto the mats.

Oli Geddes is a seasoned competitor, referee, globetrotter, half guard connoisseur and black belt under Roger Gracie

BUDO JAKE

HEEL HOOKS: THE NEXT BIG THING?

TRENDS COME AND GO IN JIU JITSU. EVERY COUPLE OF YEARS SOMEONE MAKES A BREAKTHROUGH IN ONE ASPECT OF THE GAME AND STARTS CATCHING PEOPLE OFF-GUARD. THEN EVERYONE STARTS LEARNING THE DEFENCES AND COUNTERS AND THE MOVE GETS ABSORBED INTO THE VAST BJJ KNOWLEDGE BASE.

Back in 2009, 50/50 was the big thing. There was an uproar as everyone saw it as a stalling position. There were a few athletes (mostly from Atos) that were very adept at the position and used it to frustrate, sweep, and even submit their opponents.

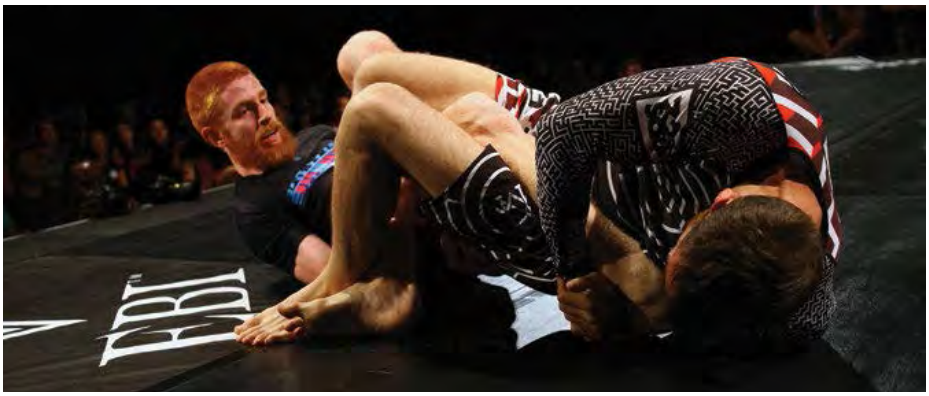
The berimbolo was another trend that is still strong today. A competitor that didn't understand this upside down rolling sweep often found himself on someone's highlight reel, tapping to a rear naked choke. While it's still a very popular move, we are seeing competitors become more savvy to it and its effectiveness is dropping, in my opinion.

Along with the berimbolo, de la Riva and reverse de la Riva might be considered trends that are still in frequent use today. Modern athletes must know these positions. Even if they aren't using these guards, they need to know how their opponents might be using them so they are able to deal with them.

So what's next? Well if Eddie Bravo's latest event – EBI 4 – is any indication, the heel hook might be the next trend to take the grappling world by storm.

The heel hook is not a new position, but what is new is John Danaher's system of leg control, counters, and attacks. John is one of the head instructors at Renzo Gracie's gym in NYC and he is known as a "mastermind" of the sport. In recent years it appears he has been studying the leglock game with intense enthusiasm. He is passing on this knowledge to two of the team's most active black belt competitors – Garry Tonon and Eddie Cummings.

Students of the leglock game will see that the way Garry and Eddie are doing heel hooks is very sophisticated. They aren't getting the taps just because they are training them more. No, there is a clear system that John has laid out and you can see the refinements in the ways they set up the attack, the way they grip their hands, the body positions, and the counters to counters that they anticipate.



I've been on the receiving end of Eddie's heel hook and it's a scary feeling. There's a fine line between defending and screaming in pain. I don't care to find out exactly where that line is.

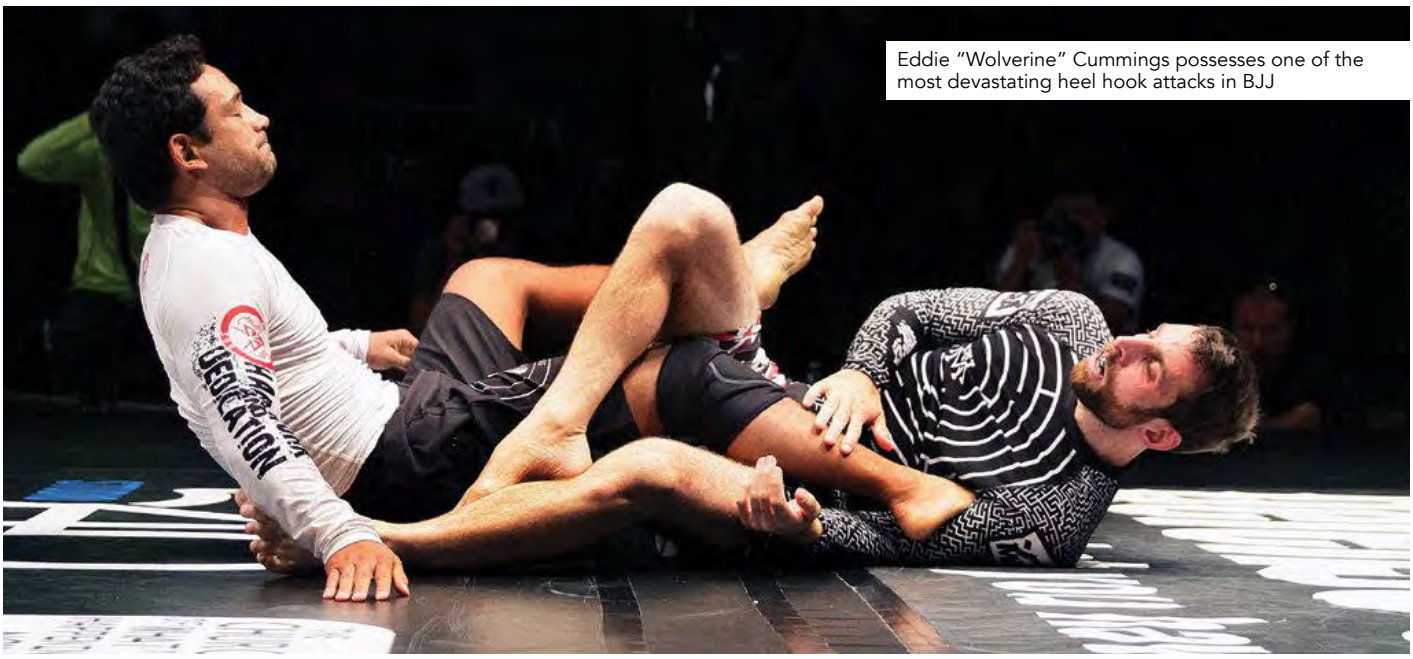
With their deep leglock knowledge, both Garry and Eddie have made strong reputations for themselves with submission victories over some big names during their short time at black belt.

At EBI 4, Cummings submitted all four of his opponents in dominating fashion. Kevin Berbrich, Russ Miura, Baret Yoshida, and Joe Soto all found themselves on the wrong side of the heel hook within minutes.

Cummings obviously had a singular focus at EBI 4. He was hunting for the legs. He wasn't there to "fight" or to "go with the flow". He had a formularised gameplan and it worked. He not only won the event, but netted the maximum cash prize of $20,000.

I have to wonder, did Eddie's four opponents underestimate his leglock game? Did they want to test themselves? Or was Eddie just that dominant in forcing his opponents to play his game?

In Eddie's fourth and final match, he faced the super tough MMA vet, Joe Soto. At this point Joe had to have known to watch his feet. Surprisingly however, Joe sat right down and offered his feet to Eddie. The commentators and crowd were shocked as Joe nonchalantly brushed his hair or blew his nose as Eddie single-mindedly attacked his feet. Joe looked cool and calm and, as Eddie was being coached by Garry, Joe even looked over and told Tonon to "shut up". That got a laugh out of everyone. Looking back, it's not a surprise that Joe was forced to tap only moments later. But now there should be no doubt about it. You have to respect Eddie Cummings' heel hooks.



Eddie "Wolverine" Cummings possesses one of the most devastating heel hook attacks in BJJ

"I DO THINK ALL SUBMISSIONS SHOULD BE PRACTISED, BUT WITH CONTROL. I WILL NOT PRACTISE HEEL HOOKS WITH JUST ANYBODY. IT'S NOT THEIR FAULT, BUT SOME LOWER BELTS JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND THE PRECISE AMOUNT OF CONTROL THAT IS NEEDED"

The interesting question is, how will Eddie do when he faces top tier competitors at ADCC and other events? By the time you read this, ADCC 2015 will already have taken place and that question may have been answered. Eddie obviously has an incredible leglock game but how's the rest of his game? He's so good with the legs that we rarely see the rest of his jiu jitsu. It will be exciting to follow his career and see how his opponents deal with his "red belt level" heel hooks.

If you're solely an IBJJF competitor, all this talk of heel hooks doesn't matter. You won't have to worry about getting your knee tendons ripped to shreds as heel hooks are not allowed at IBJJF competitions (and never allowed in any gi competitions).

Different schools have different rules when it comes to heel hooks. Some forbid them entirely, some allow them at brown belt while others do them from day one. What I would like to impress upon you is to practise them with caution. I do think all submissions should be practised, but with control. I will not practise heel hooks with just anybody. It's not their fault, but some lower belts just don't understand the precise amount of control that is needed. Too much torque and you'll be limping the next day. Even some higher belts who understand the move care about winning so much that they put that above their concern for your well-being.

So practise safely guys. Study everything, enjoy it, but tap early and preserve your walking career.

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WHY BJJ MAKES US BETTER

AS A SPORT, MARTIAL ART AND LIFESTYLE, BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU OFFERS MANY BENEFITS TO THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO PRACTISE IT. SOME ARE OBVIOUS, LIKE IMPROVED PHYSICAL FITNESS AND ENCOURAGING A HEALTHIER OVERALL WAY OF LIFE, BUT OTHERS ARE MORE SUBTLE. THERE ARE PRINCIPLES THAT ARE REINFORCED REGULARLY AS WE SPEND TIME IN OUR ACADEMIES THAT EASILY TRANSLATE TO OTHER AREAS OF LIFE.

When viewed in this light, our mat time becomes a powerful force for self-improvement for each and every one of us. Let us take a look at some of the ways BJJ helps us better ourselves.

BJJ TEACHES US THE VALUE OF SETBACKS

As a brown belt, I spent a year training with ADCC and Nogi World Champion, Pablo Popovitch, at his former academy in Florida. I learned quite a bit from my time with Pablo, including all the different ways I could be made to tap, but the most valuable lesson I took from that time was how to deal with and make the most of setbacks. Pablo, one of the most successful and decorated nogi grapplers in history, is well known for being the last man to beat Marcelo Garcia in his weight-class (at the 2009 ADCC). What is not common knowledge is how much Pablo's earlier losses to Marcelo and others before that served as real fuel that helped drive him to his ultimate success. Pablo did two things that serve as role model behaviour in his handling of setbacks: he processed the setbacks in an emotional way that reinforced his commitment to his goals, and he made the technical and strategic adjustments that those negative experiences exposed.

These two concepts are simple conceptually, yet often hard to put into practice. One of the major problems with setbacks (losses, injuries, etc.) is that they can be crippling emotionally. This mushrooms the impact, as it prevents us from moving forward even when the setback is behind us. What amazed me about Pablo was his ability to fully invest emotionally in the process of preparation and competition, but to leave the "negative baggage" behind once the competition was done. This ability paved the way for these experiences to strengthen Pablo's resolve and commitment to his goals. What it also did was to give Pablo the clarity needed to see what he had to learn technically and strategically.

A goal-oriented, mature outlook aided Pablo in his journey towards becoming a multiple-time world champion and is a great example of how we should treat setbacks. As Pablo's student, I learned from his example and applied these same principles to my training, making my mat time more enjoyable and productive. My benefits did not stop there though, as I found myself processing personal and work setbacks via the same filters. I looked for ways to minimise the negative emotional impact and then evaluated how to move forward successfully. Pablo's example had a real positive influence on my life and serves as a standard as to how we can use setbacks to achieve goals both on and off the mat.

BJJ TEACHES US TO SEEK OUT AND BENEFIT FROM DIVERSITY

Walk into most BJJ academies and you will find lots of "game diversity". This is representative of BJJ in general. Some people will have tight games based on pressure and power, while others will seem to rely on flexibility and agility. Most of us have a mixture in our games dictated by things like our physical characteristics, coaching we have received and personal preferences. Regardless of what our personal games are, having many different types of training partners on the mat with us enriches our training. Our games profit when we have to solve the problems that come with rolling with various styles and different body types. We learn to seek out and embrace diversity as we recognise how it participates in making us better.

"THE BJJ CULTURE TEACHES US TO THRIVE IN THIS NEW WORLD BY CONDITIONING US TO SEEK OUT AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE INCREASED DIVERSITY IN THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND WORK ORGANISATIONS WE FIND OURSELVES IN"

This easily translates into other areas of our lives, as it teaches us that listening to and considering different perspectives can serve to strengthen us. The world we live in today is smaller than it ever has been, in that technology has connected us in historically unparalleled ways. Ideas go from one end of the world to the other at keystroke speeds and what is new today is common knowledge tomorrow. The more we can quickly bring together different minds to work towards common goals, the more likely our success in achieving our objectives, whatever the tasks. The BJJ culture teaches us to thrive in this new world by conditioning us to seek out and take advantage of the increased diversity in the social, political and work organisations we find ourselves in. We are trained to value different points of view and to look for how they can be used to move us towards our desired destinations.

BJJ TEACHES US TO RESPECT OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Brazilian jiu jitsu promotes an atmosphere of respect on many levels. Academies vary in how formal/informal their classes and student interactions are, but regardless of their level of formality, respect is at the core of the sport. From the first class, we learn and practise techniques with our partners' safety in our hands and visa-versa. Considering their comfort and safety is a minimum requirement, as we quickly discover we NEED our partners in order to advance our own game and knowledge of the sport. This need is there regardless of the comparative skill and difference in levels of experience. Both the novice and the expert require each other to practise and grow. That reality produces behaviour characterised by a certain level of care and respect that is on display every day and night in BJJ academies.

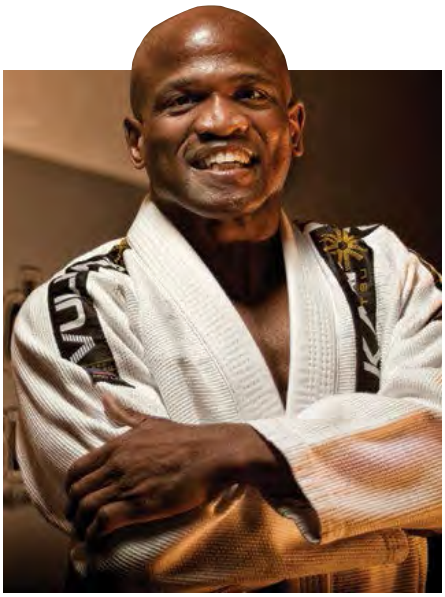
We also learn to respect our coaches, as they show us techniques and concepts that open our BJJ eyes. Something a friend of mine witnessed years ago during a tournament rules meeting gives a great word-picture of this point. As a multiple time Mundial champion and ADCC winner, Saulo Ribeiro is undoubtedly one of the greatest BJJ competitors of all-time. In the early 2000's when Saulo was at his competitive peak, he and his coach Royler Gracie were at a rules meeting before a tournament when the topic turned to how certain rules were to be enforced. Athletes and coaches took turns expressing their opinions, but when progress was slow the exchanges began to get heated. When there was a lull in the arguing, Saulo turned to Royler and actually asked if he could give his take on the subject. When people saw the respect that the already great Saulo Ribeiro felt compelled to show his teacher, it changed the dynamic of the discussion and inspired everyone to look at how much respect was demonstrated by their actions.

When I heard the story, I immediately felt determined to hold myself to a higher standard in how I interact with my instructors/coaches. While some may not want to emulate this level of formality, all can admire the spirit of respect it represents. No matter how accomplished a BJJ athlete, all of us started as white belts who had to be taught the fundamentals and guided through our first steps in jiu jitsu. Going through that process conditions us to have a certain level of respect. All in all, BJJ produces people who value and contribute to environments where people are treated with respect, regardless of position or stature.

The BJJ academy is more than just a place where we work out. It is a place where we learn to be better versions of ourselves when, and if, we are willing to accept what our own hard work, honest effort and open attitudes will teach us. When we make the choice to apply those lessons in different areas, BJJ has an exponential impact on our lives. What makes this even more powerful is in the variety of ways we reap the rewards and how it positions us to be assets to those around us. This is something to consider when we next walk through the academy doors or someone asks us about Brazilian jiu jitsu.

See you on the mat!

Sam Joseph is a 2nd degree Black Belt in BJJ under the Yamasaki Academy. He was awarded his black belt in 2007 and has vast experience as a teacher, BJJ competitor and MMA fighter.



DRILLING IN BJJ

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

DRILLING - EVERYBODY HAS DONE IT AT SOME POINT IN THEIR TRAINING, AND THERE SEEMS TO BE A PRETTY VARIED ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT. SOME PEOPLE LOVE EMBRACING THE GRIND AND NOTCHING UP THE REPS, AND SOME PEOPLE FIND IT REPETITIVE, OR TOO MUCH HARD WORK FOR THE REWARDS.

"THERE IS NO NEED TO OVER COMPLICATE JIU JITSU BY NAMING EVERY SINGLE POSSIBILITY, AND REPEATING IT UNTIL IT BECOMES A SINGULAR TECHNIQUE INGRAINED INTO PROCEDURAL (MUSCLE) MEMORY"

Kit Dale has spoken extensively about his dislike for drilling

Different instructors and athletes have their own approaches to developing the techniques, skills and fitness involved in jiu jitsu, but still there are many similarities in these approaches that help make it such a consistently effective martial art. While the approach that different schools take will be varied, at their core they will be the same.

With all the similarities and small differences considered, perhaps the most disagreed upon aspect of BJJ training is drilling - with opinions ranging from drilling being one of the most important aspects of training - to it being not at all important, and perhaps even detrimental to the development of the jiu jitsu skill set.

This raises a few questions - why is this? How can an aspect of training have such a contrasting degree of importance for different, equally influential, jiu jitsu coaches and competitors? Is drilling better suited to certain goals or people? What are the benefits and limitations of each approach, and how do they shape the style and success of different schools, both inside and outside of competition?

In an attempt to answer these questions we will take a look at the science of skill development, the effect of different approaches on individuals, and also get input from some influential jiu jitsu competitors and coaches from around the world - whose opinions include as much philosophy as technical opinion.

Let's start by defining what we mean by 'drilling', also known as 'block practice'. Drilling can be defined as "*any strict, methodical, repetitive, or mechanical training, instruction, or exercise.*" This is where we can draw the distinction - 'pure' drilling generally means the repetition of a technique with little to no variation on execution or feedback - for example repeatedly practicing a knee slide guard pass with our training partner in 'dummy' mode - assuming a position which essentially does not vary during the time practising. Quite often these drills will be formatted so that one technique is drilled for a certain time or number of repetitions, before moving on to the next. It may involve a small portion of a technique, the execution of a single technique from start to finish, or a number of them strung together, but it will be defined by the repetition and lack of variation during each drill.

So that's what drilling is, what about the rest of jiu jitsu practice? In contrast to drills or block practice, we have more open or 'random' practice, which can be defined in this context by the amount of variation in execution and feedback, restriction on the scope of the practice, or level of 'problem solving' required.

Of course it's not as simple as defining a method by calling it a drill or not. There is a spectrum of variation, feedback or randomness involved, with simple drilling being at one end, and 'free' rolling being at the other.

An example of increasing the variation in a drill would be to go from repeating a single technique to giving the student a choice between two or more techniques. More variation still would have the partner add feedback in the form of limited resistance or defence, moving upwards in variation would be something like positional or goal oriented sparring. As mentioned above, the end of this spectrum would be rolling, which encompasses all of the known techniques, with full feedback and potentially unlimited variation.

So now that we have defined drilling vs everything else, we can look at the evidence for and against the application of drills in jiu jitsu training.

A LICENCE TO DRILL?

There are a lot of potential benefits to drilling. Firstly, isolating a technique will make it easier to do a high number of repetitions, and as we will see later, repetitions are important for skill development. The high ratio of repetitions vs time means that instructors can identify and correct any errors, and these corrections can then be repeated, essentially putting the technique 'under the microscope'.

Another benefit of drilling is for the purpose of warmup or conditioning. Repeating a certain technique for reps or time is a great way to build BJJ specific fitness - lots of hard work can be done in a fairly controlled environment.

Also, perhaps most importantly, fast improvements can be seen in someone's ability with a technique in a short amount of time with drills. With a combination of instruction, drilling and correction, someone can go from not knowing a technique at all to being able to perform it without any major errors in the space of a session. If repetitions were limited, we wouldn't see such a quick rate of learning.

The increase in ability we see over the duration of a session is sometimes referred to as 'practice performance'. It is one of the reasons that some people consider drilling to be superior to other forms of practice - you can see someone increase in proficiency over the course of 100 repetitions, and they appear to have learnt the technique. This can be misleading though - there is a difference between a skill that has improved during practice and one

Rafa Mendes incorporates drilling into his training

that can be performed at a later date or during competition - this is the difference between 'practice performance' and 'real learning'.

Real learning refers to a skill that someone is able to repeat at a later date, under pressure or in response to feedback. The influencing factors in this ability are known as 'retention' and 'transfer' - or, respectively - the ability to *remember* then *apply* a technique at a future encounter.

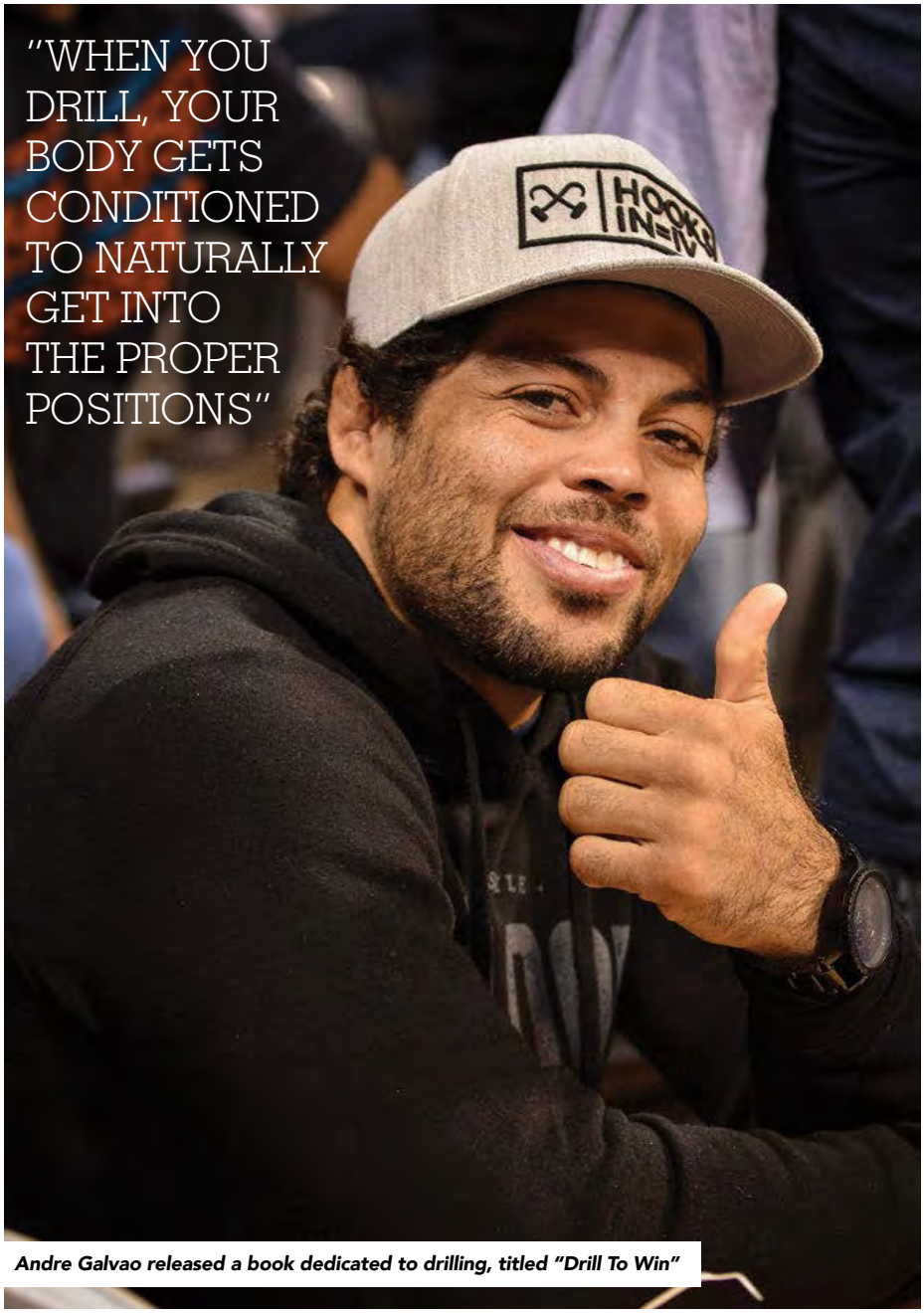
So how does drilling, aka block practice, shape up next to more open, random forms of practice for developing 'real learning'? There are many studies (*a) performed on the effects of drilling vs varied practice. They demonstrate that while drilling is superior for developing practice performance and increasing ability in a skill over the course of a single session, varied practice is far superior when it comes to retaining and applying those skills later on.

WHY IS THIS?

One of the major factors which influence motor skill retention is *feedback*. When we are performing a movement, our brains are constantly modifying it depending on whether it is achieving the desired goal. The key here is the recognition of the *function* of a movement. Our brains are geared towards solving problems and receiving feedback as to whether the solution was effective. This feedback is key in creating the lasting links that will retain, then 'summon' the skill the next time the solution is required. When you are given a problem - for example passing someone's guard - and you perform an action which accomplishes it, you have an 'aha' moment, both consciously and subconsciously. It is this moment which bolsters the brain connections needed to develop 'real learning'.

Moshe Feldenkrais was a movement expert and highly established Judoka who trained with Jigoro Kano himself. He has had a massive influence on the understanding of the way people move and learn skills. Here is a quote which sums up one aspect of the debate well:

"A simple mechanical repetition would result in no more than a static change; it would not result in any



Andre Galvao released a book dedicated to drilling, titled "Drill To Win"

kind of developmental process… there must somehow or other be a progression in one's self-awareness that brings about either new or better actions. Without conscious attention to what one is feeling during an action and without applying this attention directly to the entire movement resulting from these actions, no development will occur - simple mechanical repetition will never make this come about.... An athlete who contents himself with mechanical repetition will achieve the most minimal progress." (*b)

THOU SHALT NOT DRILL

There are some athletes and coaches who are very vocal about the idea that drilling has no place in practice, and one such person is Kit Dale. Kit is very well known (some might say infamous) in the BJJ community. He was awarded his black belt in under 5 years, and went on to become a 2x world champion. I asked him about his opinions regarding live practice versus drilling:

"To categorise an expression into finite routines and set patterns in a sport that is forever changing, adapting and evolving, will kill all artistic creativity and expression. There is no need to over complicate jiu jitsu by naming every single possibility, and repeating it until it becomes a singular technique ingrained into procedural (muscle) memory ready to execute without thought.

"Embrace the chaos, understand that jiu jitsu cannot be controlled, named or categorised and you will find your own true expression of the art - one governed by your own character, experience and thoughts. When you trust yourself, become your own teacher, learn to adapt to any situation, and become a master at problem solving and innovating - you find a freedom in jiu jitsu which is similar to that of meditation - where you are living not in the past, recollecting old techniques you've drilled, or stressing about the future outcome, but living in the present moment focusing only on the problem at hand. Which is what every great artist, philosopher and athlete should seek to achieve."

STAYING ALIVE

While there may be some athletes and coaches who shun drilling altogether, there are none who shun the idea of live practice - be it rolling or otherwise. This is perhaps the biggest factor in determining the effectiveness of a martial art - and what distinguishes BJJ practice from some 'traditional' martial arts practice. The varied, high feedback environment of jiu jitsu forges effective techniques and abilities, and leads to the development of true skills that are testable and stand up to the scrutiny of a 'real' environment.

SBG head coach Matt Thornton, who has 35 affiliates across the globe, talks about a central philosophy in his approach which he calls 'Aliveness'. I asked him about the ideas behind this and his ideas on skill development in BJJ.

"SBG began 23 years ago. And throughout that time I have been consistently asked similar questions about how and why we train the way we do.

"Aliveness is the epistemology of practical martial arts. And just as it is with critical thinking, or the scientific process, it is the method that matters most, not the conclusion. It is how we train that makes the biggest difference. And the misunderstandings as it relates to that 'how' are many.

"First, Aliveness does not mean or remain synonymous with, "sparring". I often explain to people who labour under this misapprehension that someone could train a decade in an alive manner, and never once spar. So while true that most all real sparring is alive, it is a fallacy to believe that all alive training is sparring.

"Next, we have to address the "it's too rough" myth. Smart training is never too rough. And at SBG, we always train both alive and smart.

"And finally, there is this notion that fully alive training leads to sloppy performance of the movement. This fallacy isn't just wrong, it's backwards. Our athletes around the world prove that daily.

"So do we advocate drilling? You bet we do. We drill every day at SBG.

"We just always drill 'alive'."

This varied, testable and 'alive' facet of Brazilian jiu jitsu is one of the major factors in its success, in self defence and in Mixed Martial Arts - the use of live drills and sparring in training, coupled with the test of competition, leaves no room for ineffective technique.

When we are performing a skill in a live situation, such as rolling or competing, we are not simply 'doing' a technique. We must first *read* the situation, then *plan* an approach, and then *perform* the action. This all happens in a very short amount of time, and a person's level of skill is generally determined by their ability to perform these three processes as quickly and accurately as possible, with the above ability of responding to feedback.

TIME TO DRILL

Having heard the above evidence you may be inclined to avoid drilling altogether - but don't give up on it just yet. When we are drilling, the requirement for reading and reacting to a situation are minimal - we simply repeat the technique or movement - but this doesn't necessarily mean drilling has no place in our training. The planning and feedback aspects of skills require more *external* focus of attention - that is, attention on the effects of our actions on a task. Learning a technique or movement from scratch, however, requires more *internal* focus of attention - that is, attention on what our body is doing, and how we can change it.

For this reason the simple and less varied environment of drilling may be better suited to the early development of a technique or skill, and more variation suited when the skill is automatic and needs to be applied to a more random environment. Of course it's not as simple as 'drills are only for beginners'. We also see high level competitors using drills to refine or sharpen their techniques. With the focus on a small area

Gianni Grippo believes drilling is a vital part of training

of a movement, it is possible to identify and eliminate any small imperfections - which means the technique will be even more effective when applied in the more chaotic environment of competition and high level rolling.

Andre Galvao calls this 'taking the edges off your jiu jitsu'. In his book '*Drill To Win*' he goes on to say - "*Although my personal aim is to use drills to get better at competition, it is just as important for non-competitors to learn jiu jitsu's invisible transitions. While drilling, your body learns the moves.*" (*c)

What Galvao is referring to when he says "your body learns the moves" is what's known as 'procedural memory' - also referred to as motor skill, or muscle memory. This means there is little or no conscious process needed to execute the movement, therefore it takes less time and energy to complete. Naturally, any increase in speed and efficiency is conducive to better jiu jitsu. As mentioned above, a very high number of repetitions is needed to take a movement from conscious effort to automatic execution.

With the speed that comes with automatic execution of movement, there has to be directed application. You've probably heard the old maxim 'repetition is the mother of skill'. While readily repeated by many different sports coaches, this simplified saying isn't strictly true. More accurately - repetition is the mother of habit. Repetition with correct technique and the application of those techniques in the correct manner - in response to external variables - is the mother of skill. Unfortunately this doesn't have the same ring to it.

Todd Hargrove puts it nicely in his book '*A Guide to Better Movement*' - "*Although there is very clearly a role for repetitive and sometimes boring drills in getting better at a specific skill, all elite movers attain their status not just through boring drudgery, but through playful creativity, exploration and variation.*" (*d)

We have seen that world class competitors can build their skills upon the bedrock of drilling, and others can do equally well without it. Most approaches fall in between - they use drills for technique development and refinement, and variable approaches for developing skills and application of those techniques. There are benefits to each part of the spectrum, and as the techniques continue to develop, so will the methods of practice and training. A lot of the science is reflected in what many experienced jiu jitsu practitioners already know, because the process of BJJ training is constantly tested under the scrutiny of live training and competition. What works is used, and approaches are combined in order to progress well.

So, as with most things in life and training, it comes down to balance. We find out what works and use the tools we have at hand according to our level and requirements. We use our own judgements while following the path that has lead so many to success in jiu jitsu, and most importantly - we trust in the method.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

*(*a) - Perhaps the most groundbreaking of these studies were performed by John Shea and Robyn Morgan (1979)*

*(*b) - Embodied Wisdom - The Collected Papers of Moshe Feldenkrais (2010)*

*(*c) - Drill to Win - 12 Months to Better Brazillian Jiu Jitsu - Andre Galvao (2010)*

*(*d) - A Guide to Better Movement: The Science and Practice of Moving With More Skill and Less Pain - Todd Hargrove (2014)*

THE ART OF TEACHING CHILDREN

COMPETENCE IN JIU JITSU IS NOT A QUALIFICATION TO TEACH IT, LET ALONE TO TEACH CHILDREN

Children are not small adults. Working with them is an art so unique and specialised that proper training is unquestionable in its necessity. It would be ludicrous to think of yourself as a dentist just because you know how to brush your own teeth, but many try to take on the art of teaching prematurely, in much the same way.

Athletes, all too often - whether by choice or by pressure from their seniors within the martial arts - move into the world of teaching. Such novice teachers could, at best, waste a pupil's time and money with their inexperience; at worst, and mostly where children are involved, prove to be a danger.

The physiological, psychological, emotional, psychosocial and communication needs of early years' students are complex. It is why, in hospitals and clinics, there are separate paediatric departments for children; areas that recognise the vital differences between child and adult and the need to look after them separately, using different skill sets.

Teaching children, though, is incredibly rewarding. It is fun, funny, enlightening and, if done properly, highly recommended.

This article is both for you and for the children that may come into your care. It is my hope that at the very least, you will move ahead safely with your group; at best you will be inspired to fully embrace the art of teaching children: study it, excel in it and practise it to the heights where it will enrich both your and your students' lives.

THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON: SAFETY FIRST

Working with children is high risk! You will be working with a group that are, by definition, physically, mentally and emotionally immature and developing.

Above all else, you must think safety first. At no other time will you have such an exalted position of responsibility. It can bring great rewards in terms of 'making a difference' but, potentially, it could bring your downfall. This early lesson is not meant to discourage you or scaremonger. It is offered so that you may move into your role of children's teacher with your eyes very wide open.

In an era of unprecedented scrutiny, recent and historical child sex abuse and personal injury claims, teachers of children are, rightly or wrongly, in the firing line for potential litigation. The water has been muddied by a few and the cloud of doubt is above us all. This you must accept. It is what it is.

As important as it is to keep safety at the forefront of your mind, this doesn't have to diminish your enjoyment of teaching. By becoming familiar with and adopting an attitude of 'safety first', you can move on and enjoy the following suggestions.

FIRST MOMENTS: THE 'PRECIOUS JEWELS'

The very first actions that you take with your class are the most important.

What you do in these early minutes will make or break the rest of the teaching bond that you have with your group. Treat these first moments like a highly precious but fragile jewel that needs the utmost attention, care and deepest consideration. If you drop it now it will be damaged beyond complete repair.

If this makes you nervous to get it right - good; it should. You must pay attention.

In my late teens, early twenties, I had a 'teaching teachers' mentor called Keith Reynolds. Then, and now, he was one of the best teachers I have ever had the privilege of learning from. It was Keith that taught me (and subsequent experience confirmed) that "you must begin the relationship with your group via very disciplined, clear and firm boundaries."

He would go onto explain: "These can be relaxed somewhat, in time, once a trusting, understanding and respectful bond has been established Never, ever, reverse this process (beginning with loose, frivolous boundaries, turning firm once your group loses its discipline), it will be near impossible to regain control and your teaching bond is damaged irrevocably."

TWO'S COMPANY, THREE'S A CROWD: THE TEACHER/STUDENT/PARENT TRINITY

Some trinities work perfectly well: Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, Earth, Wind and Fire, the Three Amigos. Some, however, do not.

The trinity of teacher, student and parent is complex. There is a much-used joke in staffrooms across the land that says, 'Teaching would be fantastic - if it weren't for the parents.' Although just banter, it does suggest that this tricky and much misunderstood combination of relationships must be successfully managed if you are to get the best out of your students and your own teaching experience.

Both teacher and parent share the same goal of wanting the best for their child, so why is it that this trinity can prove to be so problematic? It is in the differing skill sets and methodologies toward this end where trouble lies.

BATTLING BOUNDARIES

Different environments and situations require different boundaries and rule sets. At home, after the school day is done and the need to be 'switched-on' to learn is over, lounging around the floor, half asleep, is fine (and quite lovely). During school, when the goal of learning becomes a priority, clearly lounging is not conducive to attainment.

Children, as do we all, associate rule sets to different environments. At home, with their family and home comforts, children will settle into the 'relaxed boundary set'; at school, amongst teachers and peers, the boundaries for learning will take precedence. No real surprises here.

The confusion for children comes when an association from one boundary (parent/home) enters the boundary of another (teacher/school). A young and immature mind struggles with the ambiguity of mixed messages and compromised boundary structure. This, almost certainly, will lead to trouble.

In our experience, this may manifest as:

- *Decreased attention*
- *Poor behaviour/rudeness*
- *Heightened sensitivity/tears/tantrums*

An excellent teacher is one who understands the potential pitfalls of the Teacher, Student, Parent trinity and one who manages it with fairness and firmness. They understand that, ultimately, the primary goal of child safety is at risk if the situation is not managed.

These are our recommendations for managing the trinity:

- *Establish a 'no parents in the dojo/academy/on the mat during class time' rule (except on special display days or open days)*

- *Explain to the parents, very early on, the reasons for this rule (possibly using a parents' evening to do so)*

- *Explain to the children, very early on, the reasons for this rule*

- *Commit to this rule without hesitation*

Committing to rules, in the light of possible parental pressure, takes confidence and self-assuredness. It is an essential reason why teachers should continue to develop themselves mentally and emotionally alongside the enhancement of their teaching skills and knowledge. We will look at this a little later.

"AT NO OTHER TIME WILL YOU HAVE SUCH AN EXALTED POSITION OF RESPONSIBILITY. IT CAN BRING GREAT REWARDS IN TERMS OF 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE' BUT, POTENTIALLY, IT COULD BRING YOUR DOWNFALL"

FAIL TO PLAN, PLAN TO FAIL

As an assessor of martial arts teachers attempting vocational qualification, one of the biggest mistakes I see, aside from inefficient consideration of health and safety, is regarding inadequate, or non-existent, lesson planning.

We have all been in lessons where the teacher has made up the day's lesson on the spot; plucked out of the air with random abandon. It is easy to spot these villains of the teaching arts. It is a cardinal sin in regard to the delivery of quality teaching, and is a near fatal error for those with hopes of a formal teaching qualification.

Sheri Lennon, Head of Early Years Education and co-author of '*The Art of Teaching Children*' was animated when asked about the importance of planning lessons:

"In formal education, you would most certainly lose your teaching position if you failed to show evidence of detailed plans. Management, authorities and inspectors check them regularly. Plans are important because they give you a structured route through your lesson so that you can be sure of meeting your lesson objectives. They give you a secure base from which to organise yourself and actually demonstrate that you know what you are doing!

"In regard to children, planning is one of the key elements of effective behaviour management - being prepared and in control of all possible outcomes rather than 'winging it' and hoping for the best. Children can tell when you're not prepared, and they will inevitably punish you for it - by 'playing up.

"Plans also help you and your colleagues with insights into the way that you are approaching your teaching and show that you are helping your pupils make progress. I always use my lesson plans as a 'working document'; always scribbling notes. Who needed extra support? Who was excelling and in need of 'fast track'? What improvements could I make?"

She gives the following advice when considering a lesson plan:

- *What do you want your pupils to learn?*

- *Why do you want them to learn it?*

- *How do you intend to help them learn it?*

- *How will you know if you have achieved the outcome?*

- *Do you need specialist equipment, teaching aids or facilities?*

TO BE A TEACHER YOU MUST ALSO BE A STUDENT

In the field of professional teaching in schools, colleges and university, all teachers are required to attend regular teacher training courses, seminars and workshops in order to retain their teaching post.

In the woefully unregulated (although this is changing) area of children's martial arts instruction, there is no requirement to update your skills. It is up to you to care enough, without punitive threat, to be the best teacher you can be.

Embrace this; don't begrudge it. A commitment to your own growth as a teacher, and indeed as an athlete, will improve your teaching in ways immeasurable. By dedicating yourself to ongoing learning you are placing yourself ahead of the many amateur sports and martial arts teachers who have never considered such a thing. With ongoing learning you can become an expert in your field. You will reap the rewards of improved lessons delivered with consequently higher rates of student retention, more demand for your classes and the unbeatable feeling of a 'job well done '- never to be underestimated.

These are our recommendations for constant self-growth:

- *Read widely, both in your field of study and its peripheries*

- *Regularly attend courses, seminars and workshops, both in the art of teaching and in the sport/art you are teaching*

- *Make time for your own personal training. If your own skills improve, you will further understand the techniques that others are learning from you*

Clearly, this article can only scratch the surface of an art that can take a lifetime to master, but it is a good start.

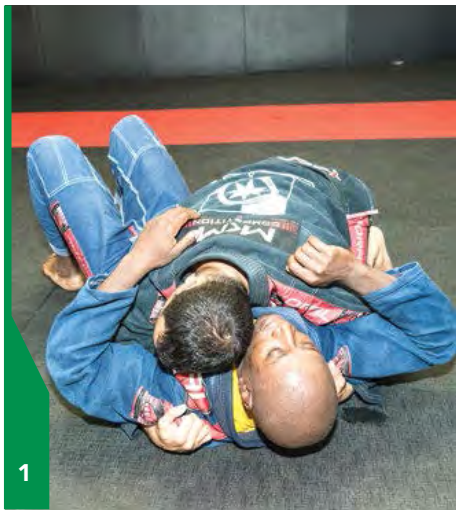
Do not be overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task awaiting you - being outstanding in the art of teaching children. It is a mammoth task, for sure; it requires your love, care and unshakeable attention, no doubt. Undeniably, it demands all that you have, and possibly more, but if you are moving through the ranks of jiu jitsu as a student yourself, you have already proved you have the mind, body and emotion of someone very able. Now it's time, if you desire, to direct those talents to the task of helping others.

MATT JARDINE IS A FULL TIME TEACHER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS AND A WRITER. HE IS CO-AUTHOR OF THE BOOKS '*THE ART OF TEACHING CHILDREN*' AND '*THE ART OF TEACHING CHILDREN MARTIAL ARTS*'. HE IS CURRENTLY ENJOYING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, AWAY FROM HIS PUPILS, IN THE HOPE THAT HIS HAIR MAY GROW BACK AFTER PULLING IT OUT- FROM TEACHING THOSE SAME PUPILS!

MASTERCLASS

BACK TAKE FROM SIDE CONTROL

1: You have reached side control. Instead of controlling your opponent's head with your left arm, I like to underhook their left armpit, as I find it gives me better control, especially against larger guys. **2:** Often your opponent will attempt to turn into you in a powerful movement to make space for an escape. **3/4/5:** Once you have ridden out your opponent's movement towards you, wait until they move back to having both shoulders on the mat. As they move, use their momentum to drive their right shoulder across their body with your left arm. **6:** Once you have exposed your opponent's back, make sure you turn all your weight into them to stop them from putting their shoulder back on the mat. **7:** Drop your weight low and secure a seatbelt grip. **8/9/10:** As your opponent attempts to move to their knees, insert your first hook. I like to stay high on their back to make plenty of space for the first hook to go in easily. **11:** From here you can insert your second hook and look to attack the neck. A detail I like to show my students is to really push your right thumb into your opponent's lapel to create a perfect pocket for the choking hand. **12/13:** From here you can secure an extremely tight choke without having to revert to a bow and arrow position.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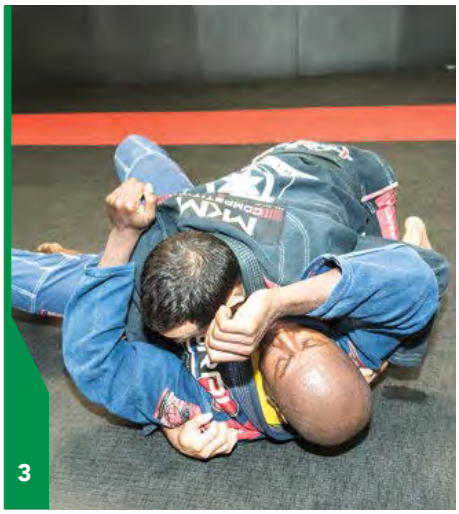
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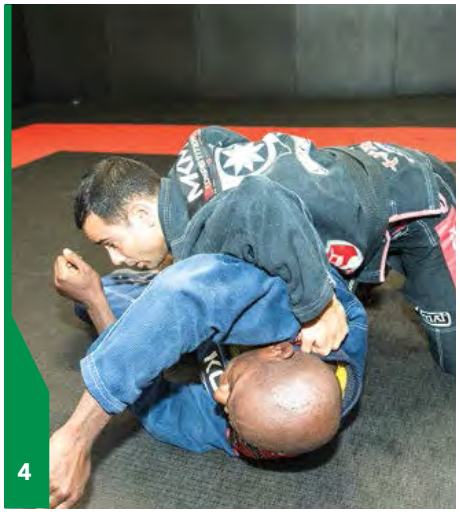
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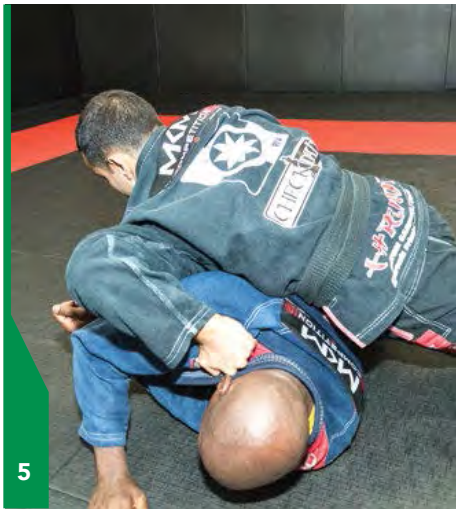
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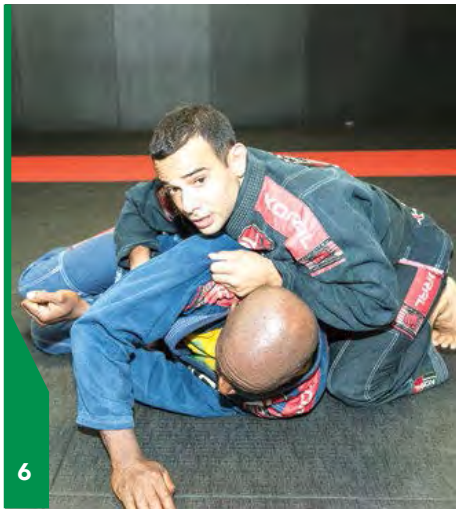
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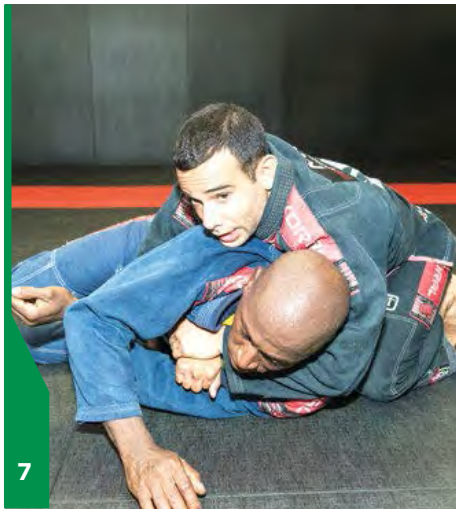
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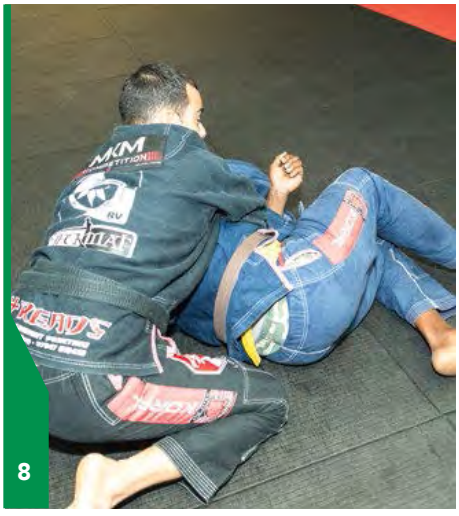
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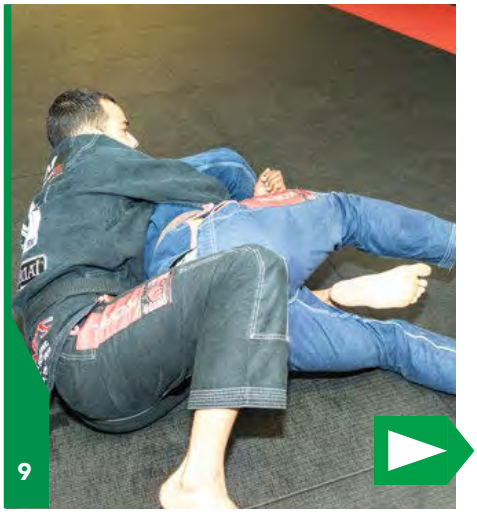
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MARCO CANHA

MARCO CANHA IS A BLACK BELT UNDER THE LEGENDARY RICARDO VIEIRA. BORN AND RAISED IN BRAZIL AND LEARNING HIS TRADE AT THE FIGHTZONE ACADEMY, MARCO MOVED TO EUROPE IN 2012 AND OPENED FIGHTZONE ACADEMY, LONDON. IN HIS FIRST COMPETITION AS A BLACK BELT CANHA TOOK 3RD PLACE IN THE OPEN WEIGHT DIVISION AT THE RIO DE JANEIRO STATE CHAMPIONSHIP – ARGUABLY THE HARDEST STATE TO COMPETE IN. THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT LANDMARK IN MARCO'S CAREER, AS HE HAD NOT COMPETED AS A BROWN BELT.

IN THIS RENDITION OF MASTERCLASS, MARCO SHOWS SOME OF HIS FAVOURITE SWEEPS FROM SPIDER GUARD, AS WELL AS A GREAT DETAIL WHEN TAKING THE BACK FROM SIDE CONTROL.

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SWEEP ONE

1: Starting on your back in spider guard with grips on both of your opponent's sleeves. **2/3:** Often your opponent will circle their wrist to release one of your grips. **4:** As soon as one of your grips is broken, switch the hand to a cross lapel grip. **5:** Next, extend your opponent's body with your right foot on their left bicep. **6/7:** Once you have a solid control of your opponent's right side, switch your left hand to control your opponent's ankle. **8:** Now you are free to move your right foot from your opponent's bicep to behind their left ankle. **9:** Use your right lapel grip to bring your opponent's weight on top of you. **10/11:** As your opponent's weight comes right over the top of you, sweep their left ankle with your right foot. Now, as you bring their weight backwards, they will have no base and will fall to the mat. **12:** Perform a technical stand up and complete the sweep.

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SWEEP TWO

1/2: Often your opponent will try to pass the open guard by pushing one of your legs to the mat. **3/4:** As soon as you feel pressure on your right knee, switch your left hand to your opponent's left lapel. At the same time, control your opponent's right ankle with your right hand. **5/6/7:** Next, lift your hips off the mat and hook your right foot on the back of your opponent's left calf. **8/9:** As you extend your body and keep all your grips in place it will force your opponent to fall backwards. Make sure to keep control of your opponent's right leg with your right hand. **10:** Often they will attempt to sit up to prevent the sweep and reach out with their left arm. **11/12:** This gives you the perfect opportunity to underhook your opponent's left arm with your right arm. From here, force them backwards and pass through to side control.

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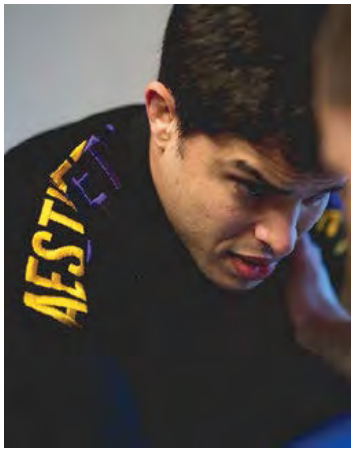
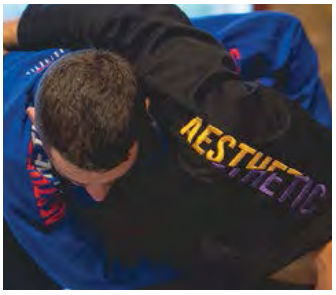
BACK TAKE

1/2: As per sweep two, your opponent is trying to pass the open guard by pushing one of your legs to the mat. However, this time you are unable to sweep by hooking your opponent's left calf with your right foot. **3/4:** From reverse de la Riva, pull your opponent towards you, but at the same time invert over your right shoulder. **5:** Push off on your opponent's left leg with your left hand to move between their legs. **6/7:** Circle your right foot behind your opponent's right thigh. **8:** Control your opponent's belt or the skirt of their gi with your left hand. **9/10:** Extend your legs to force your opponent to the mat. From here I like to keep my legs extended while I gain a seatbelt grip to prevent my opponent from escaping. **11/12:** Insert your hooks and attack the back.





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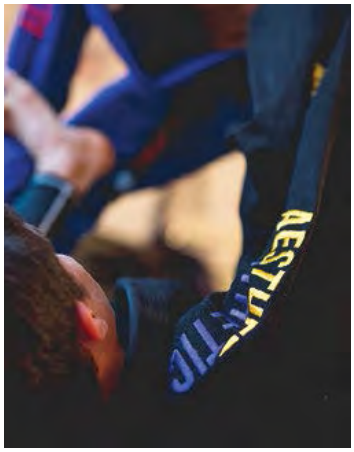

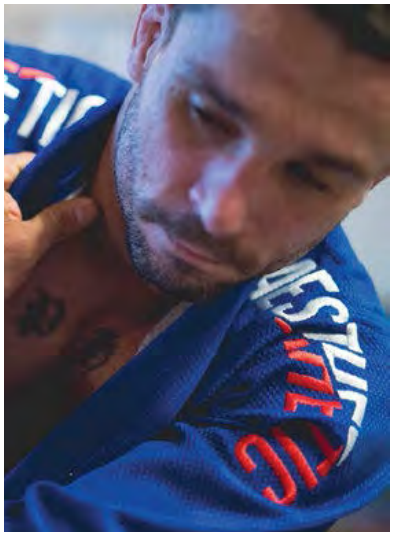

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ASK THE DOCTOR

Braulio Estima is Jiu Jitsu Style's resident BJJ Doctor, helping prescribe our readers just the right tonic of tips to improve their grappling game. Send your questions for Braulio to u2us@bjjstyle.com

Hi Braulio,
Il was interested to know what sort of diet you abide by? Do you eat red meat? Also, what sort of foods do you eat before training, and how long before? And, finally, what about before competition?

- Harry

Hi Harry,
I have tried a lot of diets over the years, but most of them back at the beginning when I was younger. I've always found it difficult to restrict my foods, because I love eating! I have never had a problem with my weight, which is lucky, but on the other hand I've developed into my lifestyle a real appreciation for clean foods. Even when I'm on holiday I don't eat rubbish, I don't eat much sugar or any fast foods. I rarely have a dessert actually, but that's not because I'm restraining myself, it's just that I really don't want it.

In terms of meat, I eat it all, but I have eaten mainly chicken through my career. Whenever I'm on a training camp there's lots of grilled chicken. I don't consider myself a dieting freak, if you know what I mean? I was always brought up with the idea that everything is good in moderation. I think the main thing about me is that I have developed good eating habits, so basically I never crave bad foods because I've come to enjoy the cleaner foods and healthy lifestyle. I would say my protein sources come pretty much exclusively from meat; I don't like to use protein powders and stuff like that. Otherwise I eat lots of salad, rice and beans. I do enjoy a good steak, and my dessert has always been an espresso!

If I have a fight coming up then I do tend to refine things a little bit and I like to eat clean pasta before a fight. Believe it or not I find if I eat too much salad before a fight it takes a little longer to digest and I can feel bloated. Salad can actually take longer than the pasta in this instance, so grilled fish and pasta is good for me before a fight. On the day of a competition I like to have some honey, just on a spoon, for some extra energy.

FLOWER SWEEP

Hi Braulio,
Do you have any details you could show on successfully landing the flower sweep? I seem to almost get there, but not quite finish it.

- Howard

Hi Howard,
This is a fun sweep! Try this out.

1: Starting from the closed guard, control your opponent's right sleeve. 2: Next control your opponent's left trouser leg with your right hand. 3: Open your guard and place your left foot close to your opponent's right foot to prevent them from widening their base during the next step. 4/5: Change the angle of your body so you are 90 degrees to your opponent, at the same time bring your right leg down heavy across their back. This will break their posture. 6/7/8: Pull your opponent's right sleeve towards you, at the same time punch your right hand away so that their left leg lifts off the mat. This will completely break their posture. 9/10: Use the momentum from the sweep to arrive in the mount.

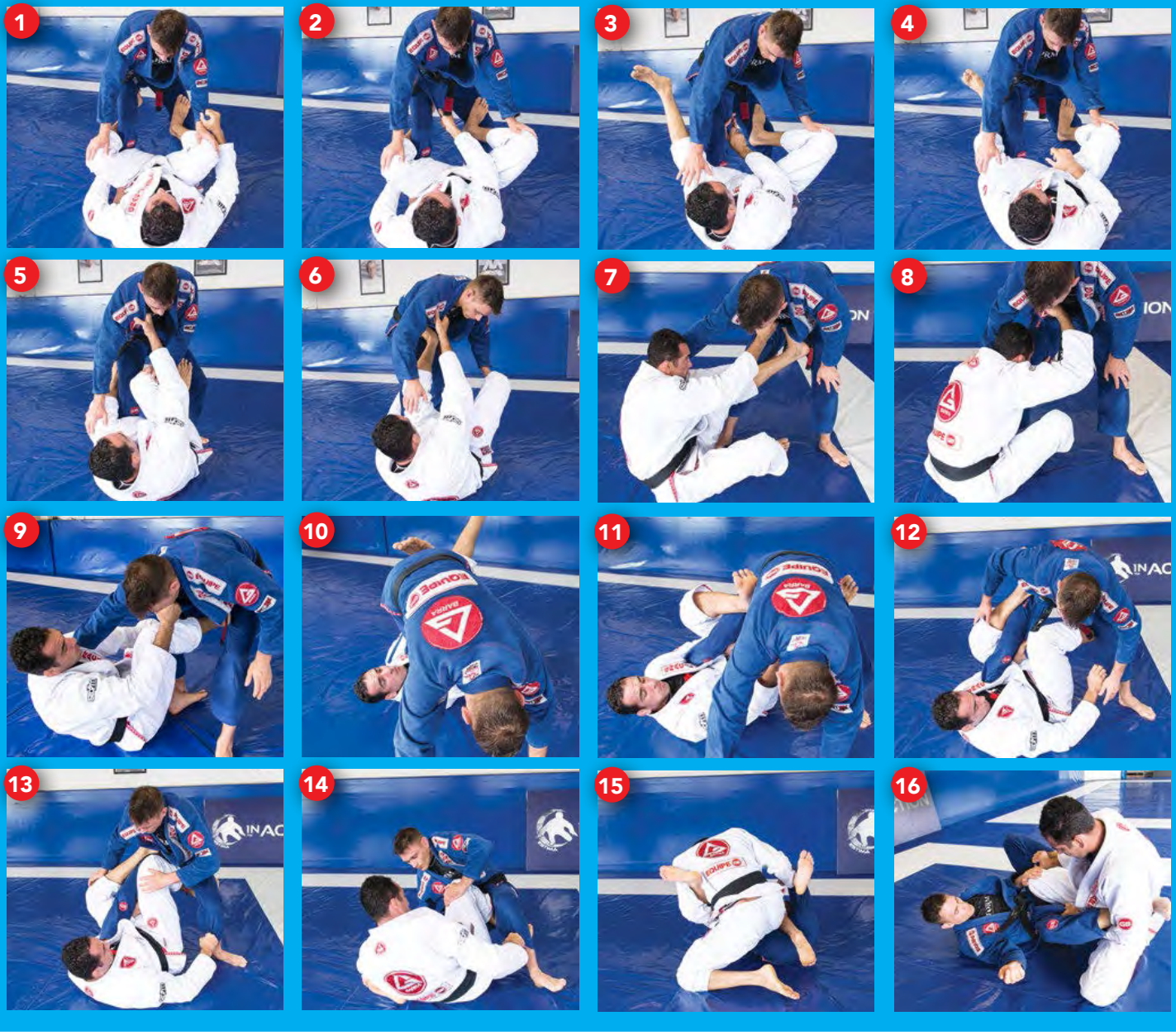
SIT UP GUARD SWEEP

Hi Braulio
Do you like to use sit up guard much at all? Would you mind showing a sit up and a sweep? I use de la Riva and reverse de la Riva a lot, so I thought it would be worth learning a transition to sit up!

- Karen

Hi Karen,
Here's a sit up and sweep that works really well for me.

1: Starting from a loose de la Riva position. 2: Control your opponent's right lapel with your right hand. 3/4: Pass your opponent's lapel under their right leg and switch it from your right to left hand. 5: Next, secure a cross collar grip with your right hand. 6/7: Remove your de la Riva hook and place your left foot on your opponent's hip. Push off with your left foot to move your opponent backwards and arrive in a sit up position. 8: Bring your left shin in front of your opponent's right shin and slide your body close to theirs. 9: Fall backwards and elevate your left leg to bring your opponent towards you. 10/11: From here you can kick your left leg through to arrive in a single leg x-guard position. 12: As your opponent attempts to posture up, grab the bottom of their left trouser with your right hand. 13/14/15/16: Raise your hips off the ground to off-balance your opponent and force them to fall backwards. Maintain your grips and use the momentum to arrive on top.



Hi Braulio,
Coming from a Sport Science background, I'm always interested in looking at different sports and assessing when athletes hit their "peak performance" age. What would you say was your peak performance age, or do you feel you've yet to hit it? I wanted to ask, as you seem to have reached your highest level later in your career than, say, the likes of Rodolfo Vieira or Buchecha. Thanks for your thoughts.

- Sean

Hi Sean,
Good question! I think this is something that is very different across all sports, but also changes a lot depending on the athlete. Genetics play a part, as you see some people who look like they're in their 30s when they're only 20. I would say I probably hit my physical peak in 2011 when I was 31. But, there are lots of things to consider with that. After reaching what I felt was my peak in 2011, I still felt I could have gone on and achieved more, but I got injured.

If I look at myself now, I still believe I could hit the peak of 2011 again, but it is all about being able to have a clean run at training without too many injuries playing a part. I have read that men are supposed to be in their peak physical state when they are 35, which is my age now.

I think if you train smart, as you get older you can hit optimum peaks throughout the course of a year. I don't think many fighters maintain the same level of performance at every competition all year around. For example, I believe that when I'm 40-years old, if I train smart and build myself up slowly for one big competition a year, I can still reach the peak performance that I have been used to from 2011. I may not be able to do that for every competition in a calendar year because of recovery time increasing, but I believe the peaks can be achieved in shorter bursts. So I guess between the ages of 29-31 were when I could maintain my peak performance for the longest periods of time, but that doesn't mean to say I can't hit one big peak a year when I'm 40.

The younger you are, obviously the harder and longer you can train, but at that stage in your career you can also lack knowledge, intelligence and experience that are crucial for success. You say guys like Buchecha and Rodolfo have hit their peak early, but I think there's more to come from these guys.

Dear Braulio,
I have been training for 12 years now, and was recently promoted to black belt. I love to teach and I wanted to ask you how you go about managing the progression of your students, specifically when it comes to promotions? I know there are guidelines in place from the IBJJF, but do you have any tips on how to judge when students are ready for new belts or things that they should be competent at before being promoted?

- Dan

Hi Dan,
This is always a difficult subject. For me I don't believe it's important how long you spend at each belt, so everyone will experience longer time frames as blue belts or purple belts or whatever. White to blue to purple to brown is a process, and the black belt is the ultimate goal. No one trains to become a brown belt, as we all start with the intention of mastering the art as best we can and achieving the rank of black belt. You will see students that start at a snail's pace but pick things up quickly later in their journey, while others will develop very early and tail off after a few years – it's a very personal journey.

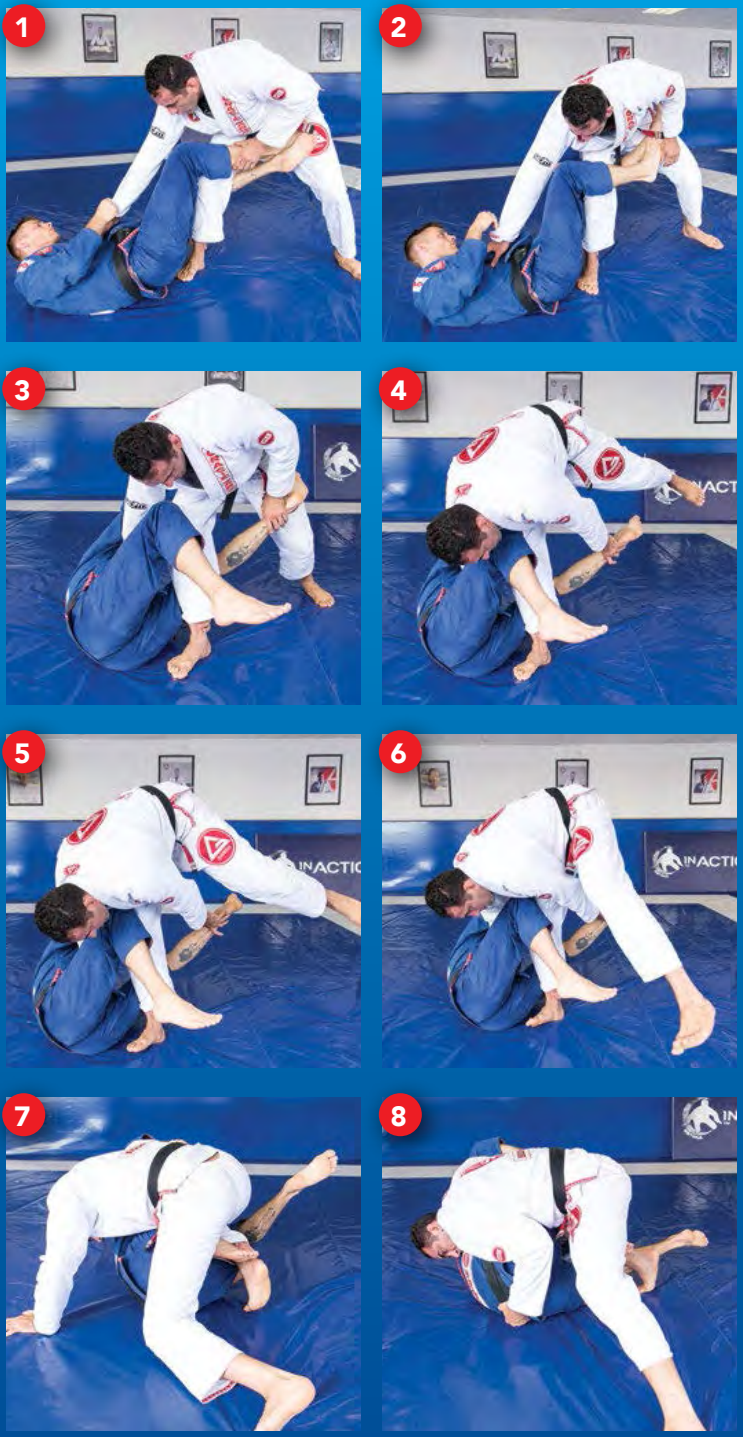
A white belt must understand the rules and the feel of jiu jitsu. This is the time when the basics that will be followed all the way to black belt are outlined. Once a white belt starts to learn techniques and you see them applying principles in sparring against others, you know they are developing. Once you see a white belt thinking with a jiu jitsu brain, it's time for them to be given their blue belt.

I have been teaching now for 17 years, so I've developed my own ways of keeping track of progression at the academy. I have my standards that I can apply, but also I have over 250 students and a great point of reference to assess everyone individually. If I see one of my blue belts is able to apply their techniques successfully against purple belts, then I know they are ready to be promoted. That's one of the benefits of having a larger academy, as it's easier to gain a real sense of how students are progressing within a large talent pool. I must stress, it's not a case of looking at students to see if they are able to "beat" other students on the mat, instead it's more about making sure they are doing the "right" things at the right time with understanding. If a blue belt can't get a technique to work properly against a good purple belt, that doesn't mean they don't deserve to be promoted.

You also have to take into consideration the fact that people train jiu jitsu for many different reasons. For example, I judge my competitors differently from recreational students, as the competitors will undoubtedly train harder and more often, which can lead to accelerated progression.

At the end of the day, you will find your own way to determine the best way to handle your students and what works best for you. Obviously we have guidelines from the IBJJF that are there for reference, but you will find your own technique to manage the progression at your academy. Just remember, everyone is different. I myself was at purple belt for three and a half years, but only at brown belt for one year, so that's a great example of how personal the journey really is.

DLR BACK-TAKE PREVENTION



Hey Braulio
Have you got any tips on how to prevent guys with long legs going from de la Riva to your back? There's a guy at my academy who does it super consistently on me, and I don't want to have to kill him, haha!

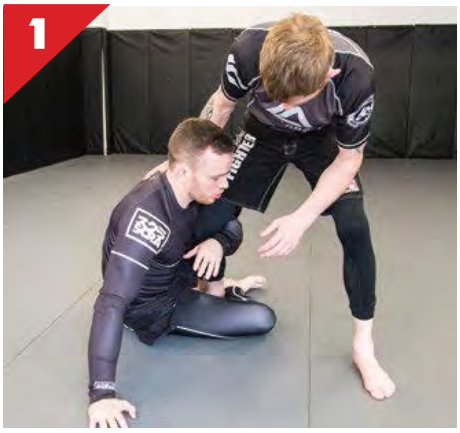
- Jo

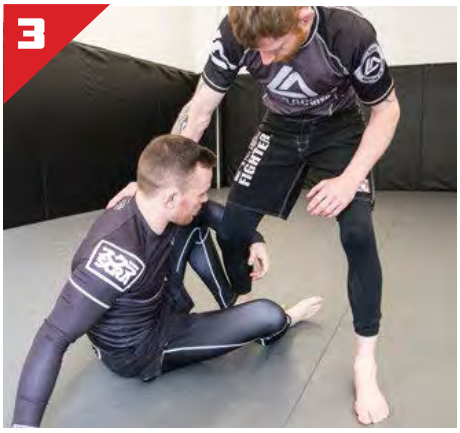
Hi Jo
This can be tricky, but here's a really cool detail on how to prevent it.

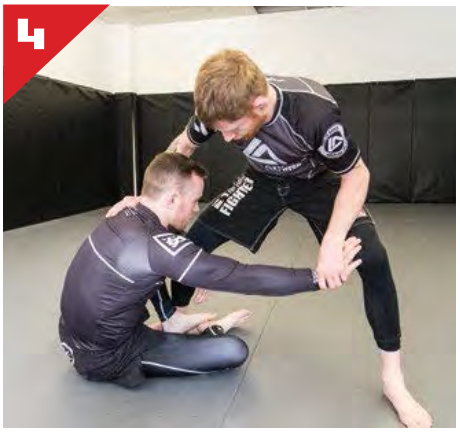
1: Your opponent has managed to secure a deep de la Riva position with their left leg right across your hip. 2: Step backwards slightly to prepare for the vital stage of this escape. 3: As your opponent looks to move to your back and secures a grip on your belt with their right hand, you must control their left ankle with your left hand. Often people will miss this key detail and instead will try to control their opponent's right leg, but that is a mistake. 4/5: Push their left leg down to the mat as you step over it with your own left leg, removing the de la Riva hook. 6/7/8: Square up to your opponent and drive your weight into them to completely kill their guard and start to work your pass.

SITTING GUARD SWEEP WITH CHOKE FINISH

1: Starting in a sitting guard position with one leg wrapped. **2/3:** Slide your hips backwards before inserting your instep in front of your opponent's right shin to transition to shin-to-shin guard. **4:** Place your right hand on your opponent's far knee and push on it to transfer their weight onto that leg whilst also maintaining space between their legs for the transition to follow. **5/6/7:** Fall to your right shoulder whilst pulling their trapped knee into your chest and elevating their leg using your left shin. **8/9/10:** Kick your left leg all the way through as you slide underneath your opponent, guiding their right foot to your left hip. Raise your hips, pinch your knees and stabilise in footlock guard. **11/12/13:** Take your right hand across your body and control the outside of your opponent's right foot, keeping it tight to your body. Raise your hips and drive them over your opponent's knee, sweeping them to the ground. **14/15:** Lift your hips up and pass their foot across your body into the cross ankle lock position, finishing with your grip above their knee to prevent them from re-establishing top position. **16/17/18/19:** Basing out on your hand, do a technical stand-up movement and drive over and into your opponent, forcing their knees over into a leg drag position. **20/21/22/23/24:** As your opponent tries to drive your head away, tuck into their armpit whilst simultaneously sliding your right arm around their neck to establish the head and arm position. From there, pass around their legs whilst locking in the choke and hold tight, dropping your weight into their shoulder for the tap.



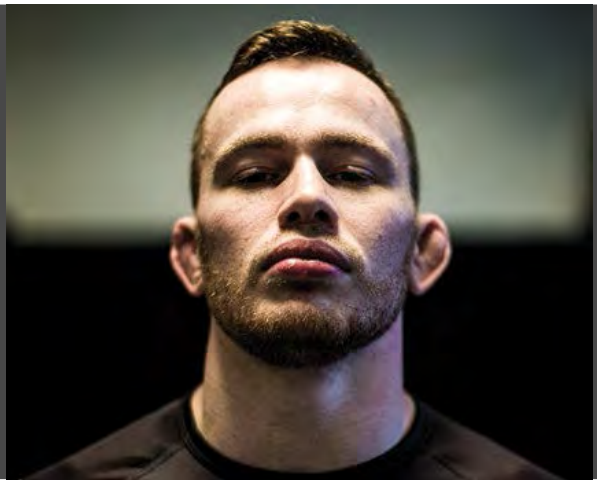


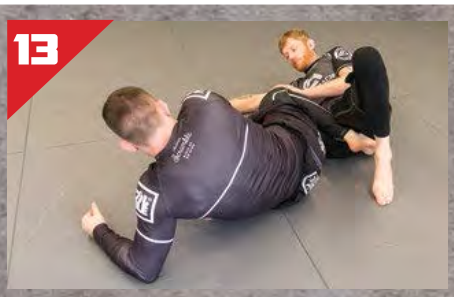


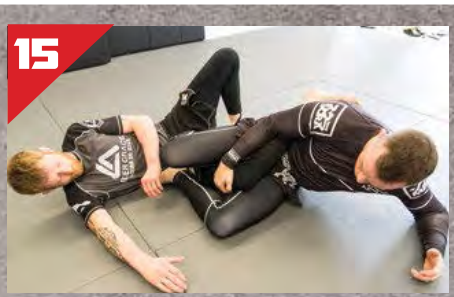
SHEDDING THE GI

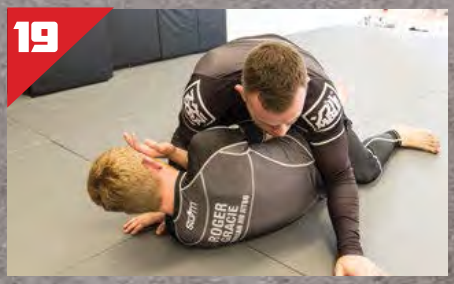
OLIVER GEDDES

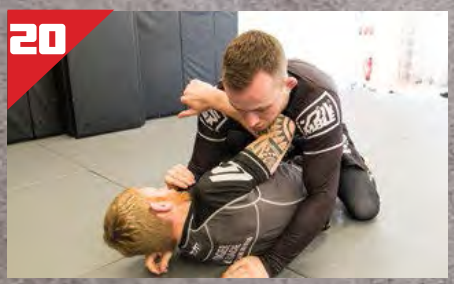
Showcasing a range of his favourite techniques inside this rendition of Shedding the Gi is none other than Roger Gracie black belt, Oli Geddes! Oli is one of the most active competitors in the world, recognised for his expertise as a half guard player.

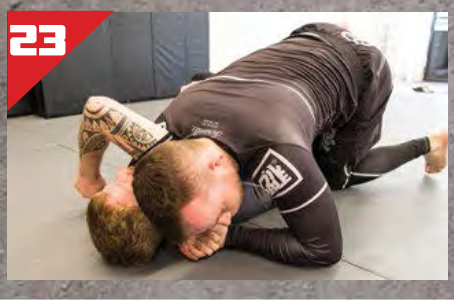


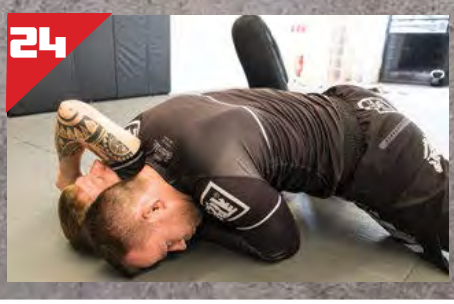










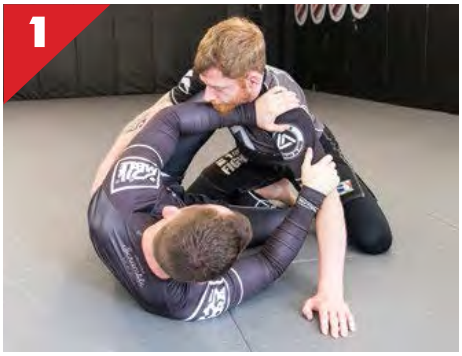


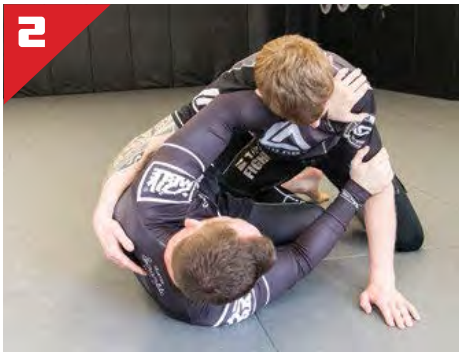
SITTING GUARD TO STRAIGHT FOOTLOCK

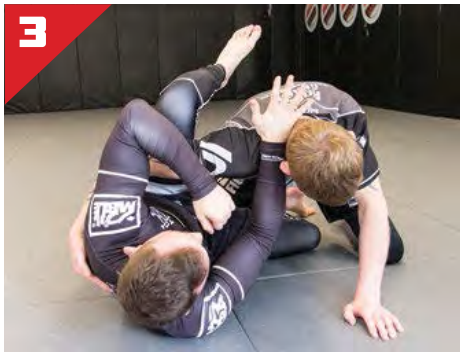
1: Starting in the footlock guard position. **2/3:** Drop your right leg to hook behind your opponent's knee whilst your left instep circles their right thigh. **4/5/6:** Lift upwards with both of your legs, drawing your knees into your chest to force your opponent to step forwards on his left leg. As he does, secure his left ankle for a double ankle grip. **7/8/9:** Driving back with both your knees and pulling on your opponent's ankles, knock him to the floor. **10/11:** Keeping hold of both of the ankles to ensure he does not come back on top, pass your right foot across onto his hip, driving the blade of your foot into his body to keep distance. You can then release his second ankle and lock up a traditional footlock grip, arching your back and leaning over your shoulder for the tap.

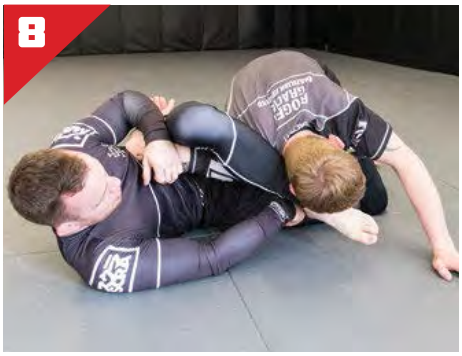
HALF GUARD TO OMOPLATA

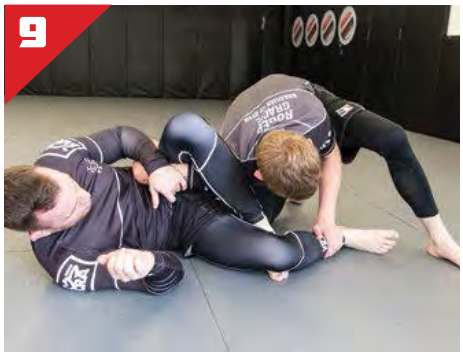
1: Starting in a typical half guard position with a defensive shield in place. **2/3/4:** As your opponent drives in for an underhook, use your right hand to push his head to one side and redirect his pressure. At the same time, bring both of your knees up to your chest, pinching your left knee downwards on his shoulder to both assist with the redirection and keep his arm trapped. **5/6/7:** Use your right hand to pass your left leg in front of your opponent's face, keeping your knee tight on his shoulder and your weight leaning towards your right side. **8/9/10:** If your partner steps up his left leg for base, and you are moderately flexible, you can free your leg and then thread it through their knee to create a horrible 'stretch omoplata' position which will often get the tap.**11/12/13/14/15:** If you aren't particularly flexible or your opponent doesn't give you the opportunity, you can free both of your legs and turn into the traditional omoplata position, extending your legs to break them down to the ground and hooking their far armpit for control. From there, pull up on their far shoulder whilst driving down on their near shoulder to get the tap.

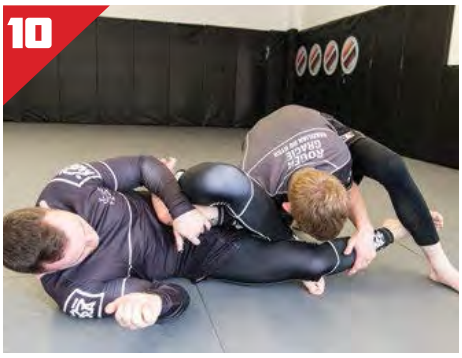


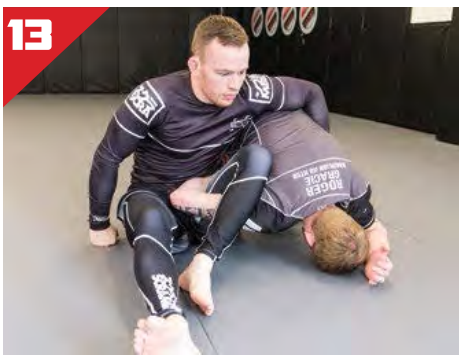


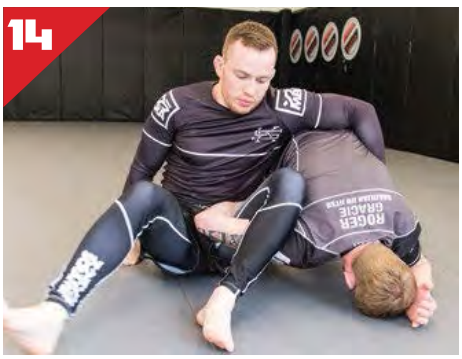


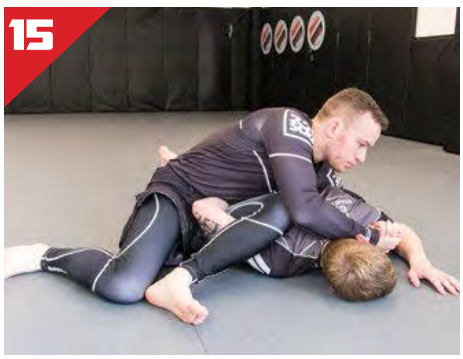






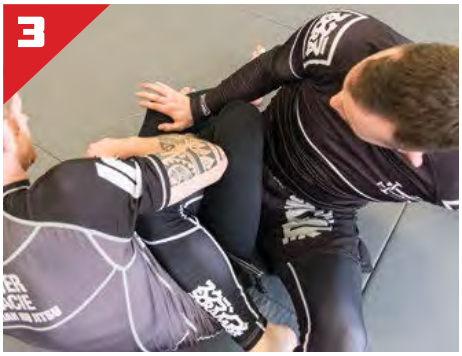


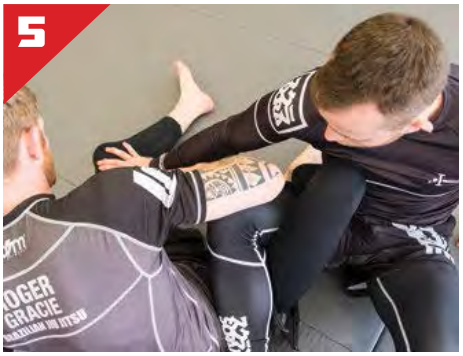


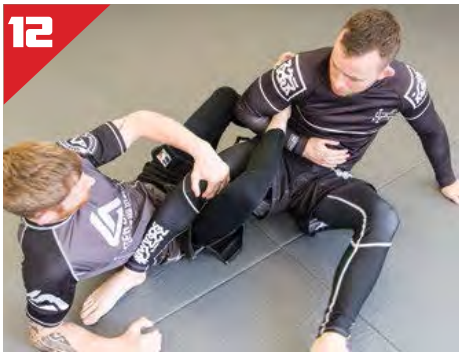


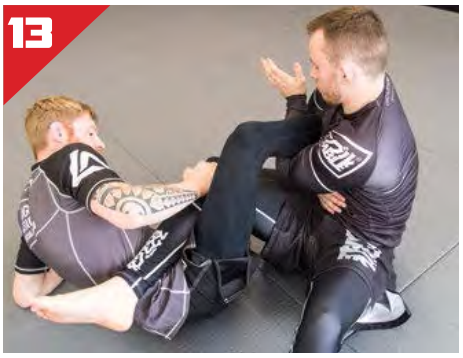
50/50 GUARD ATTACKS

1: Starting in the seated 50/50 guard. **2/3/4/5:** Turning towards your right, place your palm directly on your opponent's left knee and push off whilst moving your body to your left to unlock their feet. **6/7/8/9/10:** As soon as their legs open, wrap your opponent's right foot in an ankle lock grip and base out with your left hand before starting to turn strongly to your left, opening out your legs into a wide scarf hold-esque position. It is essential that their knee remains pinned to the ground by your weight during this. From here you can drive your shoulder and hip forwards to finish the footlock. **11/12/13/14/15:** If your opponent is able to defend the ankle lock by leveraging your knee upwards you can switch to a reverse grip foot lock / calf crush by taking your left arm underneath the middle of their calf and locking up a figure four grip. From there you can rotate back outwards to apply pressure, prevent them from escaping that way, and get the tap. If they defend by turning back the way they came, you can easily switch your grips back to the previous footlock, and chain back and forth as necessary.









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TECHNIQUE

ESCAPING THE TURTLE POSITION

GUARD RECOVERY ONE

1: You are in the turtle position, making sure to keep your elbows tight to your hips and your forearms tight to your thighs. Defend your neck with your hands, making sure to sit low on your feet to defend as much space as possible. **2:** Control your opponent's right knee to prevent them from changing the angle. **3:** Post your left hand on the mat, but make sure you don't post too far forwards, or you will create too much space. **4:** Slide your left leg towards your opponent and turn into them. **5/6/7:** Continue to move your left leg high over your opponent's knee as you keep turning towards them. **8:** Finish up by closing your legs and arriving in closed guard.

WITH NICK BROOKS

ESCAPING THE TURTLE IS SOMETHING THAT CAN OFTEN BE OVERLOOKED, BUT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE A SET OF "GO TO" TECHNIQUES TO HELP RECOVER YOUR GUARD OR IMPROVE YOUR POSITION. THESE ARE SOME OF THE SITUATIONS THAT YOU WILL COMMONLY FACE AND MY FAVOURITE WAYS TO ESCAPE THEM.

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01

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GUARD RECOVERY TWO

1: You are in the turtle position, making sure to keep your elbows tight to your hips and your forearms tight to your thighs. Defend your neck with your hands, making sure to sit low on your feet to defend as much space as possible. **2:** Push your lower back upwards to feel where your opponent's weight is distributed, which also creates some space to tuck in and roll. **3:** Roll over your right shoulder, while trying to move your hips backwards. This is NOT a forward roll, but more of a spiral motion. **4/5:** Keep rolling over your shoulder. **6:** Finally you will arrive in closed guard. Often you can catch your opponent in a triangle in the transition, but worst case you will arrive in a safe position.

CLOCK CHOKE DEFENCE

1: Control your opponent's right sleeve and pull it towards you to relieve the choke pressure. **2:** Grip your opponent's right knee to make it harder for them to step forwards and apply the choke. Slide your right leg backwards, and then slide your left knee under your body to get your hips below and under your opponent. **3/4:** Roll your opponent over your body until you have reversed the position into side control. **5/6:** Next, long step backwards and walk around your opponent's head to break the grip on your collar. **7/8:** Move around 180 degrees and secure a tight side control.

TURTLE REVERSAL

1: You are in the turtle position and your opponent has an underhook on your left side, controlling your left lapel. Bring your elbow back to attempt to control their left arm, but you only manage to control their wrist. **2:** Slide your right knee back and outwards at a 45-degree angle to create space. **3:** Slide your head under your opponent's armpit, while turning your body towards them. **4:** When you sit backwards and your head arrives on the other side of your opponent's body, make sure you sit on the floor to make yourself heavy. Keep your head tight against their body to stop them turning towards you. **5/6:** Keep moving to your opponent's back by pulling their hip towards you and setting up the seat belt grip. **7:** Put your top hook in and push your hips forward, while pulling back with the seat belt grip. **8/9:** Keep turning to complete the back take.

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BJJ AND WELL-BEING | DOES JIU JITSU REALLY BENEFIT OUR MENTAL HEALTH?

In the jiu jitsu community, we are surrounded by stories of BJJ helping people to improve their lives. There's lots of anecdotal evidence that doing Brazilian jiu jitsu has supported participants in managing anxiety, dealing with depression and improving self-esteem. But what does the evidence say? Are there measurable benefits of BJJ for mental health? If it turns out there is a link between jiu jitsu and psychological well-being, how exactly does this work? And how can we structure the BJJ experience to promote positive mental health?

You might think this topic doesn't have much to do with you, but mental health problems are far more common than we realise. For example, the mental health charity, Mind, suggests that one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year, and the US-based National Institute for Mental Health estimated that in 2013, there were 10 million adults in the US who had experienced serious mental illness in the past year.

Unfortunately for us, there is very little research looking specifically at the effects of BJJ on mental health. There are a handful of studies in martial arts but they too are varied in the type of martial art and in the quality of research to draw any strong conclusions. The most useful area of enquiry for us is the research examining mental health and exercise more generally.

"AN ABSENCE OF COMPETITION ENHANCES PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING BUT IT'S HARD TO GET THROUGH A JIU JITSU CLASS WITHOUT SOME FORM OF INTERPERSONAL COMPARISON"

At this point, we need to distinguish between mental illness at a clinical level – such as depression or anxiety diagnosed by a mental health professional – and other aspects of psychological well-being such as self-esteem and positive mood states. Starting with serious mental health concerns, large-scale survey studies with tens of thousands of individuals have found associations between physical activity and good mental health. However, most of the studies have been correlational. That is, they indicate an *association* between exercise and positive mental health but we cannot be sure it was exercise that *caused* a reduction in depression or anxiety.

A randomised control trial (RCT) is the more rigorous 'gold standard' method to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Based on a review of RCTs, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in England concluded that people with mild to moderate depression might benefit from low-intensity psychosocial interventions including structured group physical activity. They suggest an exercise programme should consist typically of three sessions per week of moderate duration (45 minutes to 1 hour) over 10 to 14 weeks (average 12 weeks). Happily for us, jiu jitsu classes would seem to fit this bill. As BJJ instructors, however, it's important that we recognise the boundaries of our competence. Most of us aren't trained therapists, clinical psychologists or psychiatrists, and the NICE guidelines also recommend that the exercise programme is delivered by a competent practitioner.

More than once in the BJJ world I've come across the slogan 'I don't need therapy, I just need jiu jitsu'. The phrase points to the psychological benefits of the martial art we love but I wonder whether we sometimes overstate the positive consequences of BJJ for mental health? While structured exercise is recommended as a treatment for mild to moderate depression, severe depression usually requires professional treatment which may include medication and psychotherapy – with exercise playing a supporting but not major role. Furthermore, while the evidence suggests that exercise may alleviate anxiety in the short term, the long-term effects still need more investigation, and exercise doesn't currently feature in the NICE guidelines as a treatment for clinically-diagnosed anxiety, panic disorder or phobias.

So what about psychological well-being more generally? Can doing jiu jitsu help us to feel a little better? The answer is yes, it would seem so. Exercise has been found to be one of the best ways of improving our mood, raising our energy levels and reducing tension. Positive mood changes don't come automatically with exercise though.

Some aspects of BJJ in particular might serve to enhance or undermine our mood. For example, an absence of competition enhances psychological well-being but it's hard to get through a jiu jitsu class without some form of interpersonal comparison, whether that's lining up in grade order or sparring with a training partner. On the other hand, the rhythmicity and repetitiveness of drilling techniques may help participants to free the mind for more important issues. The closed and predictable nature of a well-structured jiu jitsu class allows people to plan their actions and minimises unexpected events, and BJJ classes involve exercise at a duration, intensity and frequency appropriate for improving our mood (at least 20 minutes, at moderate intensity, two-three times per week).

Self-esteem is another central component in psychological well-being, and improvements to self-esteem are often cited as a key benefit of martial arts. RCTs have shown that physical activity can be used to promote increases in self-esteem and positive perceptions of the physical self. Like much of the research exploring the links between exercise and psychological well-being, however, the mechanisms underlying these effects are still unclear.

So it seems that on the whole, doing BJJ might be a good thing for our mental well-being. This begs the question, how exactly does exercise enhance well-being? As it currently stands, we can't be 100% sure. Some scientists have proposed physiological explanations such as increases in blood flow to the brain or changes in neurotransmitters (e.g., those oft-cited endorphins), while others have suggested psychological mechanisms such as feelings of control, competency and improved self-efficacy. In reality, it's likely to be an interaction of physiological and psychological mechanisms.

In the absence of more solid evidence, what does this mean for BJJ instructors? If you want to support positive mental health in your students, the best bet is to provide training which physically challenges your students but doesn't crucify them, allows them to experience a sense of competence, and promotes opportunities for positive social interactions, fun and enjoyment.

For students of BJJ, it's great that jiu jitsu may benefit us mentally as well as physically. But remember, if you are experiencing mental health problems, do what's right for you. Sometimes that might include seeking professional support.

Dr Rebecca Hill is a Psychologist chartered by the British Psychological Society with a PhD in Sport and Exercise Psychology. She is also a BJJ black belt competitor under Professor Victor Estima and a current European Champion. She blogs about sport psychology and BJJ at www.rebeccalhill.com.

EQUAL $£$£ FOR BJJ?

My last feature focused on highlighting the importance of supporting women within jiu jitsu, and the push for equal pay for both male and female fighters. Recently the IBJJF announced that it was to award the number 1 ranked male and female black belt athletes a $10,000 prize at the end of the 2015-2016 competitive year. The reaction from the community has been largely positive, but it was also met with a small backlash from a handful of people, including Kim Terra, who have shared their disagreement with the decision. This has led to widespread online discussion and debate around the idea of 'equality', and what form equality should take in competitive jiu jitsu.

After trawling through, and taking part in a handful of discussions with top level competitors, I am going to present some of the recurring arguments within the arena of equal pay, before sharing some suggestions that world champions think could help in finding a suitable solution. The main points have been put into 2 categories:

MEN HAVE SUPERIOR JIU JITSU AND ARE MORE COMPETITIVE

In the initial statement from Kim Terra, he made a comment stating that: "The level of male jiu jitsu is infinitely superior to female jiu jitsu." Comments like this are not only unfounded, as they are largely opinion based and as a result, incredibly subjective, but they are also unnecessary and unconstructive. Andre Galvao does not share Kim's opinion: "I believe they (women) deserve it, because they have good technical and more exciting fights sometimes."

I, and other female athletes, greatly appreciate that many other members of the male jiu jitsu community agree with Galvao. The women's fights at submission only events like Polaris, and the second Metamoris, were deemed the most active and technical fights on the card. This could be compared to watching the lighter men's divisions at competitions where speed, tenacity and technique are showcased more regularly than in some of the higher weight divisions and often result in a more viewer friendly match-up.

Using this approach to justify equal pay for both genders is, frankly, baffling. It is not evidence based, nor quantifiable, and merely causes controversy whilst serving no purpose other than to alienate the female jiu jitsu community. As a result, it does not deserve further discussion.

MEN BRING IN MORE MONEY, BECAUSE MORE MEN COMPETE

There can be no disputing the fact that more men compete than women. 144 black belt men entered the adult divisions of the IBJJF World Championships in 2015 compared with only 44 black belt women. This year, the IBJJF required all black belts to qualify, meaning that they had to accumulate at least 50 points in order to compete.

One argument presented was that that if more men are competing, then it is the men who are paying the majority into the IBJJF. Therefore, if they are paying more in, they should get more out. From a business point of view, this makes sense. However, Hillary Williams (2010 world champion) argues that you have to be careful what logic you apply when talking about paying less money to women based on smaller entry numbers, and ultimately smaller divisions: "If you're not using that logic to justify less for men's super-lightweight divisions, as well as the super heavies, (the light-middle heavy are the most stacked divisions), then it shouldn't be applied to the women".

But is it as simple as numbers? More men doesn't necessarily equate to a harder, more competitive division (discussed in more detail later). Kristian Woodmansee, a brown belt training under Andre Galvao at ATOS offered his opinion on this approach: "The athletes have no control over how many participants there are and what weight division they sign up for, so you can't be biased and offer more to one division than the other".

Kristian also believes that whilst this current system is not perfect, at least there is now an incentive for both men and women to compete. "If athletes are being paid consistently, more athletes are likely to sign up and compete regularly. Divisions will become full and everyone will have multiple fights to win the money." Of course, this argument is founded on the idea that the money from entrance fees is being used as prize money. Kit Dale stated that: "If the money isn't getting taken out of the men's division then it shouldn't matter". At this stage, we can only speculate as to where the IBJJF have collected the money from.

One of the more favoured arguments circulating is the idea of payouts being a direct reflection of the interest that is generated by the viewers, like it is in many professional sports, such as football and basketball. I urge you to approach this argument with caution, as it is fundamentally flawed. An article in the Telegraph this June compared the cost of men's and women's football season tickets. They found that on average, a season ticket to a men's Premier League team was over £500, whereas the equivalent cost of a season ticket to a women's Super League team was a mere £32. Females receiving less prize money in those sports is directly related to them receiving less from their main source of income, the paying spectators. That is most definitely, equality.

However, this approach does not transition smoothly into competitive jiu jitsu. Hillary Williams provides an important reminder: "We pay the same fees for training, competing, travelling, and still receive less than the men. The main source of income for the IBJJF comes from the paying competitors, NOT the spectators (the very opposite of what other, professional sports do!). Lower our costs associated with competing, and I think I speak on behalf of many women when I say that we would happily accept a reduction in prize total. Whilst we pay the same to compete and train as the men, we can rightfully expect the same in prize money".

Aside from that, the events are not gender specific. Sure, the categories are, but there are no separate events for men's Pan Ams and women's Pan Ams. The spectators and competitor fees for both are merged and unless specified upon entry, you have no idea whether the spectators are attending to:

a) Watch their favourite male athletes,
b) Watch their favourite female athletes, or
c) Support team-mates or their favourite athletes

My humble assumption would be that spectators are there to witness the best jiu jitsu in the world whilst supporting team-mates, regardless of gender.

SOLUTIONS

Is the current system entirely fair? I can see why some would say no, probably not. The general consensus seems to be that the IBJJF's move is a good starting point. But what about a long term solution? A few prominent competitors have offered their input on how to improve the current system.

Braulio Estima brings an interesting element to this argument, stating that the difficulty of the division should be taken into consideration when determining a fair prize, regardless of gender: "I think the money should pay according to the amount of people in the bracket and the amount of world champions". The example he provided was if Michelle Nicolini, Mackenzie Dern, and a handful of other champions were all in the same bracket, they should have the potential to earn a higher prize total than Leandro Lo, if he was in a bracket with nobody else at his level. "For me it is not about female or male, but the difficulty of the mission".

This point could potentially nullify the argument regarding there being an advantage for women, based on the smaller division sizes. With there being fewer women in each division, there is an increased likelihood that there will be a world champion in your division, which may not necessarily be the case for the men's divisions. The downside is that an awful lot of analysis would need to occur in order to calculate the prize funds. We risk 'monopolising' our athletes and treating them like playing cards, where Michelle Nicolini is worth 10 points whereas an unknown black belt may be only worth two. BJJ top trumps anyone?!

Some, such as Dillon Danis, are happy there is money on offer at all: "It's awesome to see the sport growing and any little improvement is a step in the right direction".

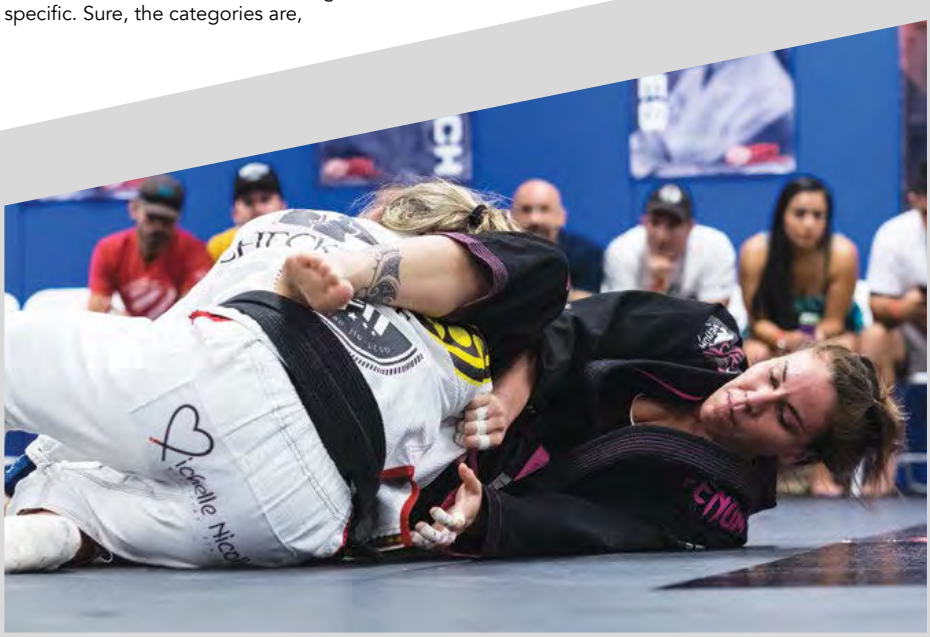
"WE PAY THE SAME FEES FOR TRAINING, COMPETING, TRAVELLING, AND STILL RECEIVE LESS THAN THE MEN" - HILLARY WILLIAMS

Others do not agree. Andre Galvao agrees that it is a good step, but the prize fund on offer does not compare to what lots of international athletes will have to spend in order to have a chance of winning the money: "$10,000 is a very low prize. For those who live in the UK, Brazil and Europe it will be impossible to be first place in the rankings and cover all the expenses".

Alternative solutions include categories that are carefully matched and capped at an equal number. For example, the approach the Five Grappling league is taking: eight women, eight men, all equally established and seasoned competitors, competing in a carefully matched league for an equal sized prize.

Nick Haloski, owner of Oss Gear clothing, is someone who actively promotes this idea: "I think a great solution, and one that would end most arguments, is if the IBJJF did a women's pro league similar to the men's, with equal pay. Equal fights, just as exciting and it will help the sport grow. As women's jiu jitsu grows it benefits everyone".

The IBJJF has got people talking about alternatives and suggestions for improvement, and for those who support the growth of jiu jitsu, this is finally a step in the right direction.



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CARBOHYDRATES

When it comes to macros, carbs are always the first one that people want to talk about. Carbs have received so much press coverage over the last few years as a result of diets such as the Atkins, Carb Backloading, Carb Nite, Carb Cycling, IIFYM (If It Fits Your Macros) and many others. Just like in any situation where you have an information overload, it makes it increasingly hard to make an educated decision as to which is right for you, at the right time, especially when it comes to BJJ.

ARE ANY OF THESE DIETS BENEFICIAL FOR BJJ?

Well, the answer (as always) is that it depends on the person. As I mentioned back in my first macro article, when you understand the principles you can pick your own methods. Before you run off looking for the latest super diet, it is better to gain a solid understanding about what a carb is, what it does and how you can use carbs to get the best out of your BJJ training.

Before we go into more detail on carbs it always has to be mentioned that every individual is different and that everyone should talk to their doctor, coach or consult a professional before you undertake any major changes to your lifestyle (especially if you are a little new to all of this).

SO WHAT IS A CARB?

The NHS says:

"Carbohydrates are a source of energy. When eaten, the body converts most carbohydrates into glucose (sugar), which is used to fuel cells such as those of the brain and muscles"

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO A BJJ ATHLETE?

Firstly, we have to look a little bit more into what happens when you eat carbs to get a better understanding of how we should add them into a nutrition plan. When we eat carbs the body converts them into glucose. Thanks to hormones (such as insulin) the carbs are then shuttled to our muscles to help fuel exercise and activity. Now, if we don't use all of the glucose, our body then converts the glucose into something called glycogen. This is then stored in the muscles and liver for later use.

So, what happens if we eat too many carbs and our glycogen levels are full? Well the body then stores it as fat. This is why carbs get such a bad rap. No carbs, no glycogen, no stored fat (in theory). However, don't be scared by carbs! They are vital to help athletes performing and recovering correctly. All we need to do is look at a few factors so that you can make carbs work for you, instead of against you. In this article we will look at:

- ***Types of carbs***
- ***When to have carbs***
- ***Which carbs are best, and at what times***
- ***How to work out your individual carb tolerance***

Now there are some of you that are reading this thinking, "I can eat as many carbs as I want and never get fat. Carbs are great!" Well no one is talking to you and I would keep quiet about it unless you want a few carb-deprived people choking you a little too long in training. Seriously though, many people tolerate carbs extremely well with no fat storage, despite taking in a ridiculous amount. However, the principles in this article still apply to help you get the most out of your carb intake.

Ok, so let's look at which types of carbs are best. I'm going to split them into two groups: fast acting and slow acting (more on that in a minute). Before we look at the food types, we must also realise that the digestion and absorption rates of these carbs will differ when combined with other food types. For example, white rice is fast digesting. However, if you eat it with a large fatty steak then the digestion rate goes way down (due to fat slowing down digestion). With that in mind, make sure that you eat the right combination of foods at the right times (more on this in the next issue).

Let's have a look at the different types of carbs:

FAST ACTING

- WHITE RICE
- WHITE POTATOES
- HONEY
- KIDS' CEREALS
- DEXTROSE
- WAXY MAIZE
- VITARGO
- GLUCOSE
- FRUITS
- HIGHLY BRANCHED CYCLIC DEXTRIN
- FOOD HIGH IN SUGAR BUT LOW IN FAT

FINALLY, THE MACRO NUTRIENT THAT HAS EVERYONE TALKING!

SLOW ACTING

SWEET POTATOES

BROWN RICE

OATS

QUINOA

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VEGTABLES (MOST OF THE CARBS IN THE FORM OF FIBRE)

There will be people reading this that still think of carbs as the devil. These people just seem to blow up when they eat carbs. They get bloated, hold water and pile on the fat on a diet that includes carbs. They know that carbs are the way forward to improve performance and recovery, but their past experience keeps them away from carbs. So what is the solution?

The first thing is to ascertain how many carbs a person can tolerate. If you are doing this yourself you need to look at your activity levels and your past experience. If you have a very high activity job like brick laying, working in construction or you are on your feet all day, plus training 4-6 times a week, there is a very high chance you will do better with higher carbs. Sit at a desk all day and train twice a week? Best keep carbs at the lower end. It is also a really good idea to keep carb intake a bit higher on training days and lower on off days.

What I do with clients that have had a poor experience with carbs in the past is to start them on 1g of carbs per pound of body weight. I see how they handle that then we add carbs in or we reduce them depending on what we see.

When I first set up a diet for people I generally keep carbs around training times (before, during and after). This allows people to use the carbs directly for workouts and then recovery from those workouts.

Carbohydrates are best taken in around workouts, with faster digesting sources being a good choice (think things like white rice and other foods that are high on the glycaemic index).

However, if you tolerate carbs well, it is a good idea to have them in other meals that surround your training sessions. A good idea is to add them pre and post training, then if you tolerate that well (none to minimal fat gain) you can start to add them into other meals.

An example of this would be:

MEAL 1 – Protein and fat

MEAL 2 – Protein and fat

MEAL 3 – Protein and carbs

TRAINING SESSION

MEAL 4 – Protein and carbs

MEAL 5 – Protein and fat

If that works fine you could go to:

MEAL 1 – Protein and fat

MEAL 2 – Protein and fat

MEAL 3 – Protein and carbs

TRAINING SESSION

MEAL 4 – Protein and carbs

MEAL 5 – Protein and carbs

Like all other macro nutrients, carbs are not the devil. They have got a really bad rap over the last few years, leading to a fear of them. Carbs need to be included in any correct nutrition programme, but they need to be tailored to your activity level and the individual's response to them.

Now that you have a better understanding of each macro nutrient we will look next issue at how to put them all together to maximise recovery and performance in BJJ.

Stay healthy,

Mike

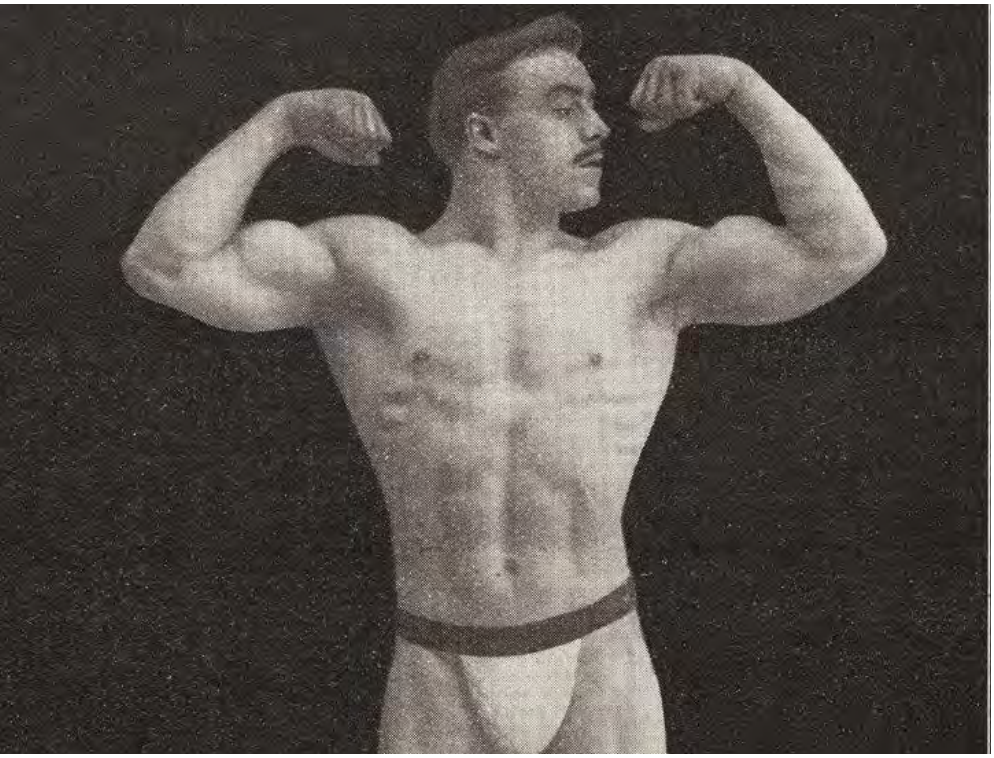
Unorthodox Nutrition work with athletes worldwide, from local stars right the way through to UFC fighters, Premiership Footballers and World Champions. They specialise in helping combat athletes lose fat and gain muscle so that they can operate to the maximum of their potential during training and competition.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT WWW.UNORTHODOX-NUTRITION.COM

FIT TO FIGHT

GETTING STRONG AND STAYING LEAN (FOR MOST PEOPLE) WITH ANDY MARSHALL

FOR JUST ABOUT ANY SPORT, CARRYING TOO MUCH FAT IS A BAD THING. THE ONLY EXCEPTIONS THAT COME TO MIND ARE STRENGTH ATHLETES IN THE SUPER HEAVYWEIGHT CLASS, AND SUMO WRESTLERS. FOR THE REST OF US, BEING LEAN IS INVARIABLY A GOOD THING FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE.



If you compete in a sport with weight classes, being leaner while having the same amount of muscle lets you compete in a lower weight class. If you play a sport, and two athletes have the same absolute strength but one of them weighs less, he or she will have more relative strength, which means more speed, higher jumping, more agility, and all-around improved performance.

"ASSUMING YOUR GOALS INVOLVE BEING MORE MUSCULAR, STRONGER OR FASTER, MUSCLE IS YOUR FRIEND. THE MORE YOU CAN HAVE THE BETTER, AND THE FASTER YOU CAN ADD IT, THE BETTER"

With that in mind, however, although being lean may be beneficial to maximise performance on a given day, that same state of leanness isn't necessarily beneficial to maintain year-round, for this simple reason: the quickest way to gain muscle and strength is via a combination of hard training and a caloric surplus. And a caloric surplus means you'll gain a little fat in the process, unless you're simply a genetic freak.

Assuming your goals involve being more muscular, stronger or faster, muscle is your friend. The more you can have the better, and the faster you can add it, the better.

Let's say you have six months until you need to be at your physical peak for some sort of competition. If you try to spend those six months gaining only muscle without an ounce of fat, you're simply not going to be able to gain much muscle. You may gain some, but you're not harnessing the most powerful tool in your arsenal – a good old caloric surplus. You would end up gaining more muscle and strength by eating in a surplus for four months, aiming to gain 0.5-1.5 pounds per week, gaining a bit of fat in the process, and then cutting for two months.

However, you can certainly take things too far. If you eat a huge surplus and gain three pounds per week, you'd gain proportionally more fat than muscle, have to cut yourself off from a caloric surplus early, and then spend far too long losing the fat you'd just gained.

Gaining a ton of fat for the sake of getting a little stronger and more muscular is a misguided approach, but so is trying to stay super lean year-round, unless your sole reason for training is to look shredded 24/7, 365.

If your goals involve gaining as much muscle and strength as possible, in the shortest time possible, you need a caloric surplus of at least 300-800 calories per day, but in doing so you'll gain a little fat in the process. That's entirely fine.

Assuming you have competitive aspirations, your long-term progress matters more than losing visible abs for a couple of months. Just to give some ball-park figures, most drug-free athletes find they perform best somewhere between 10-15% body-fat for males, and 15-25% body-fat for females; low 20% body-fat for males and 30% for females is probably the "fattest" you'd want to be at the end of a four-six month bulk.

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BROWN / BLACK BELT (MASTER 1 MALE) OPEN WEIGHT
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BROWN / BLACK BELT (ADULT FEMALE)OPEN WEIGHT

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A PROGRESS JIU JITSU M6 KIMONO

Progress Jiu Jitsu has offered up one of their awesome M6 kimonos for our latest giveaway!

Progress Jiu Jitsu's M6 is a fantastic all round kimono, ideal for competition and everyday life on the mats. Constructed from 450gsm pearl weave, the jacket is light, durable and features a modern cut ideal for sport jiu jitsu competitors. The M6 is IBJJF legal, comfy and basically a super cool gi!

To enter our draw to win this M6 kimono kimono, all you need to do is answer the following question:

HOW MANY IBJJF BLACK BELT WORLD TITLES HAS RAFA MENDES WON?

A) None
B) 50
C) 5

Send your answers to bjjstyle@gmail.com with your full name, best delivery address and size information.

Good luck!

Closing date – 12th November 2015. The draw takes place on 13th November 2015 and the winner will be notified by email. One entry per person.

For a full list of Progress Jiu Jitsu products visit:

WWW.PROGRESSJJ.CO.UK

JIU JITSU STYLE REVIEW CORNER

DO YOU WANT YOUR PRODUCTS REVIEWED?
To have your jiu jitsu gear featured in JJS, send us an email at info@bjjstyle.com

JEAN JACQUES MACHADO "BEST OF ONLINE" APP

Following on from the success of his online training program, Jean Jacques Machado has released "BEST OF ONLINE" on the Apple Store. The app is free to download, but it then offers users the option to purchase three individual volumes of techniques, priced at £1.49 per volume.

Machado has cherry picked some of the most popular and requested techniques from his online program to include in his app, which is currently only available on the Apple Store and is optimised for iPhones.

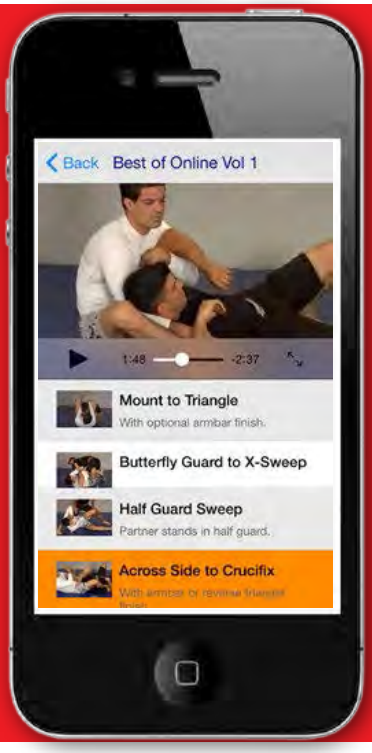
For those of you who may not know (shame on you) Jean Jacques Machado is regarded as one of Carlos Gracie Jnr's top students in the '80s, going on to win countless tournaments in his native Brazil before relocating to the USA and picking up an ADCC title. Machado is also known for the array of famous students training with him in California, as well as for promoting Eddie Bravo to black belt.

The app interface is very basic but simple to navigate and very stable – the app didn't crash once while browsing or during a video session. The techniques are a mixture of gi and nogi, with no real segregation between the two within the three volumes. Machado's insight as an instructor is second to none, and his teaching style is both compelling and concise. The videos are filmed via one camera angle and there are no replays or fancy editing tricks. With each clip coming in at around five minutes, the content is both easy to digest and pick up quickly when bored at work or waiting for a train.

Unlike many apps and instructionals on the market at the moment, Machado chooses to focus on the most popular techniques from his online program instead of a specific topic. Though not ideal if you're looking to improve in one area of your game, we found scrolling through the random list of techniques a lot of fun and a cool way to stumble across positions that you may not have considered addressing.

At £1.49 per volume, which includes around 16 techniques, you get real value for money with this app and we definitely recommend checking it out.

AVAILABLE VIA THE APPLE STORE WITH IN-APP PURCHASES AT £1.49



PROGRESS BJJ TIJUCA TENIS CLUBE RASHGUARD

The Tijuca Tenis Clube in Rio de Janeiro was the first home of the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu World Championships from 1996–2006. It has acted as the theatre for some of the most famous battles in our sports history and was coined "the temple of jiu jitsu" by the legendary Saulo Ribeiro. Sadly, the famous venue no longer hosts any BJJ events but never fear, Progress Jiu Jitsu have launched an epic tribute rashguard to keep us all happy!

As huge fans of the good old days when the Mundials were still hosted in their native Brazil, we couldn't wait to get our hands on this rashguard. As expected from a Progress Jiu Jitsu product, the rashguard design is minimalistic, but very classy. Two small tennis rackets are located on the upper left chest area, with the Tijuca Tenis Clube wording sprawled across the main chest section. The main wording is supported by Saulo Ribeiro's famous "temple of jiu jitsu" quote, along with a small Progress Jiu Jitsu logo.

The back design sees two large tennis rackets forming the main centrepiece, with further Tijuca Tenis Clube wording above it and "Campeonato Mundial de Jiu Jitsu" below.

The rashguard's deep silver/grey colour is a stand out, and definitely unique compared to most rashguards on the market at the moment. All design elements are sublimated, so you don't have to worry about bits rubbing off over time.

Aesthetics aside, we found this rashguard to be very comfortable and breathable, ideal for nogi sessions or to wear underneath your gi. We would advise that ordering a size up could be worth considering for those who are heavily built, as our reviewer, who is generally a medium, found it slightly too small.

This is the only Tijuca Tenis Clube tribute product we have ever stumbled across, and a sure fire winner amongst jiu jitsu geeks. We love the fact that the design has been kept clean, simple and stylish, with Progress opting to steer clear of "overdesigning".

All in all, this is a must have purchase!

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.PROGRESSJJ.CO.UK FROM £35

AUGUSTO "TANQUINHO" MENDES: THE COMPLETE CHAMPION PART 2

Despite his recent omission from jiu jitsu competition as a result of a budding career in MMA, Augusto "Tanquinho" Mendes is a fighter needing little introduction. During his time in sport jiu jitsu Tanquinho scored notable victories over top featherweights Rubens Charles and Rafa Mendes, picking up two WPJJC titles and IBJJF world titles in both gi and nogi.

In this second instalment of his "Complete Champion" series, Tanquinho focuses on the guard, covering over 45 technique tutorials across two DVDs. His unique teaching style sees Tanquinho break down his techniques into the most basic elements so jiu jitsu players of all levels can understand them. Impressively, he also covers an extremely diverse range of positions, from closed guard to 50/50 attacks. Personal highlights include Tanquinho's series of half guard and de la Riva techniques, which includes 'reverse de la Riva to kneebar' and 'deep half guard sleeve control sweep'.

As an elite level featherweight, all of Tanquinho's techniques are perfect for fighters of any size. One of the beauties of studying the games of lighter BJJ athletes is that you can rest assured their "go to" moves will work for everyone, no matter how small (or big) they are.

The DVD includes:

Closed guard wristlock
Trapped armlock from closed guard
Closed guard sweep 1
Closed guard knee-in-middle sweep
Pass defence choke
Omoplata sweep from closed guard
Omoplata variation from closed guard
Butterfly guard arm drag to back entrance
Lasso bicep slicer
Lasso sweep
Lasso spin-under sweep
X-guard sweep 1
X-guard sweep 2
X-guard sweep 3
Counter to x-guard sweep
Spider arm post submission
Lapel omoplata sweep
Spider kick out sweep
De la Riva sweep to knee ride
Counter to de la Riva sweep 1
Counter to de la Riva sweep 2
De la Riva to deep half guard
Deep half guard sleeve control sweep
Deep half guard lapel feed sweep
Deep half guard counter to back
Reverse half guard lapel wrap sweep
Reverse de la Riva to kneebar
Half guard shin sweep
Half guard shin counter to x-guard sweep
Half guard shin to kneebar
50/50 guard escape to back control
50/50 guard sweep
50/50 guard out the back sweep
Leg drag defence
Knee on belly defence
Back control defence
Calf lock defence 1
Calf lock defence 2
Closed guard armbar defence 1
Closed guard defence 2
Triangle defence
Double under pass defence 1
Double under pass defence 2

Created alongside Digitsu, the DVD production value is top class, with concise camera work and crystal clear audio. The DVD packaging is also fantastic and will go down well as a collectable in years to come.

AVAILABLE VIA WWW.DIGITSU.COM FROM $69.99

MY FIGHT YOUR FIGHT BY RONDA ROUSEY AND MARIA BURNS ORTIZ

Such is her fame, it seems almost inconceivable that MMA fans won't know the life story behind one of the UFC's most bankable stars, Ronda Rousey. But this book, written by Rousey and her sister Maria Burns Ortiz, covers much of the UFC champion's early years as a struggling up and coming judo athlete which most people might not know about.

Ronda's book is split roughly into two sections. The first half chronicles her judo career and the latter half covers MMA right up to her fight with Cat Zingano. Ronda being Ronda, you can expect sections where she takes the opportunity to get a few things off her chest – for example her disdain for the ineptitude and disorganisation within US Judo (governing body of judo in the US). One farcical passage details the scene where the governing body neglected to supply an American flag, such was their lack of confidence at winning an international medal. When Rousey does win the tournament, her own mother had to go out and buy a thrift store US flag so that the organisers had something to hoist at the medal ceremony.

Another area where she excels at pouring scorn and venting disappointments are moments where she writes about her ex-lovers. These poor unfortunates are almost universally described as some form of creep, dirtbag or loser.

Each chapter opens with a foreword where Rousey attempts to offer some motivational insight. Some might consider these opening sections a bit annoying – they seem a slightly clumsy attempt at granting the reader an insight into how her mind ticks.

The chapters covering her judo career are very revealing. Most people won't have experienced the level of training that a full time Olympic athlete has to go through. It seems many of Rousey's issues stem from her need to cut weight all the time – drugs, bulimia, a hermit like dedication to training – all serve to deprive Rousey of much of her teenage years growing up as other teenagers would. Her efforts were rewarded however - qualification as the youngest ever athlete to make it into the US Olympic Team at the age of 16, World junior champion, Olympic bronze medalist and many, many other titles.

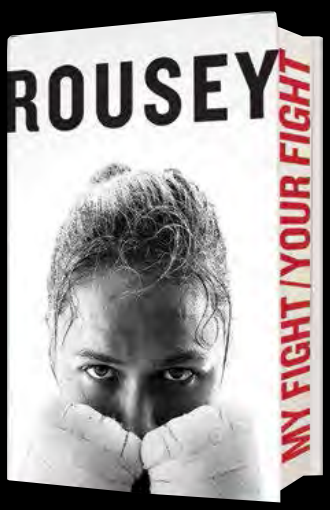
Where this book excels is when Ronda writes about her mother and father. The chapters where she details her relationship with her dad, his crippling injury and physical decline leading eventually to his suicide are heart breaking. And mum, clearly the driving force in her life, is the person who Ronda looks up to the most. These passages read as a heartfelt and truly honest picture of Ronda the person.

After a brief hiatus basically bumming around and 'finding herself' the latter half of the book sees Ronda venture into her MMA career. With no experience in the ring, no money (despite working three jobs), an addict boyfriend and only sheer determination going for her, it seemed even this wasn't enough to kick start her on the road to MMA fame and fortune. Her Armenian boxing coach, Edmond, pretty much ignores her for three or four months, only reluctantly agreeing to work pads with her following a scene where Ronda throws a tantrum and walks out after being denied yet again. (Edmond is referenced stating that this incident is what made him realise she did in fact have the passion he was looking for in a fighter).

Inevitably, Ronda climbs up the amateur and then pro MMA ranks with meteoric speed – much of which has been extensively documented within the MMA press. What this book offers instead is Ronda's own personal breakdown of each of her pro MMA fights. In many respects, Ronda the professional fighter is a different person to Ronda the wide eyed 16 year-old judo prodigy, but then again, some things remain the same – her fierce desire to win and her utter self-belief is not too dissimilar to her attitude during her judo days.

Ronda's autobiography is a rollercoaster read. From naïve judo kid to penniless wannabe MMA fighter, to UFC Champion and Hollywood film actress, it seems that Ronda has succeeded in realising all her dreams. Given the constant media intrigue and pantomime drama that surrounds the MMA scene, one somehow suspects that the Ronda Rousey story will continue to develop over the coming years – which we'll all read about in this book's sequel.

AVAILABLE VIA AMAZON.CO.UK FOR £14.99 IN PRINT



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GI SPOTLIGHT | BATTLE GEAR ADVANTAGE KIMONO

OVERVIEW

Coming in at well under 1.5kg in weight and with a price of just £48, the Battle Gear Advantage kimono is an ideal offering for competitors and avid jiu jitsu travellers. The unique yellow and green colouring and "tapered fit" make this one of Battle Gear's finest products to date.

JACKET

The jacket is constructed of 350gsm, ultra light pearl weave cotton. The customary "Battle" wording is situated along the left lapel, as well as on the lower skirt section on the back of the jacket. The upper arms feature a cool Battle Gear "Advantage" logo, which include striking green and yellow colouring. The green theme is continued by the contrast stitching across the whole kimono.

The jacket fit, described on the Battle Gear website as "tailored", is extremely comfy to wear. The skirt and sleeve length were spot on straight out of the bag, and the body section shrank to a perfect fit after a number of washes. The quality of the jacket really did surprise us considering it is so light and offered at very much a budget price. After a month of testing, there were no signs of stress or damage on the jacket, which suggests you will get decent longevity with this purchase.

TROUSERS

The trousers feature the Battle Gear Advantage logo on the upper right thigh, but left otherwise clean and simple, aside from the green contrast stitching. The yellow drawstring waistband is secured by four green belt loops, and the trousers were notably comfortable when rolling. Though constructed from 100% cotton, the trousers remain light and ideal for competition and fast drying when on the road.

DETAILS

One of the main perks of the Advantage kimono is that it manages to maintain a very high level of quality, despite being so light. The rubber lapels are nice and thick, which is not often the case when dealing with light, travel kimonos.

SUMMARY

All in all, you will struggle to find a kimono so well suited to travel and competition at such an astounding price. Though probably not the ideal purchase if you're looking for a heavy duty, every day training gi, it is definitely a reputable option for fans of lighter, tailored kimonos. At £48, you can't really go wrong!

AVAILABLE VIA

WWW.BATTLEGEARBJJ.COM FOR £48

TOURNAMENT REVIEW

WORDS: CALLUM MEDCRAFT

FIVE GRAPPLING SUPER LEAGUE

August 2nd was an important day for Five Grappling, who launched their inaugural Super League at Studio 540 in California. The event saw both eight men and eight women battle it out for $10,000 in cash prizes, with some of the greatest jiu jitsu athletes on the planet in attendance. If that wasn't enough, fans were also treated to nogi super fights between Keenan Cornelius and Otavio Sousa, as well as Garry Tonon and Joao Miyao.

It was underdog Tim Spriggs who stole the headlines and walked away with the first Five Super League title, while Mackenzie Dern continued her excellent run of form by completely decimating all-comers in the Women's division. Five Grappling are true supporters of Women's BJJ, offering up equal prize money for their Five Grappling Champions.

MEN'S LEAGUE FIRST ROUND

LUCAS ROCHA VS EZRA LENON

Ezra Lenon beat Jeff Glover a day prior to the main event to earn his slot in the Five Super League. This was due to a late replacement being needed for the injured Hector Lombard.

LUCAS ROCHA WINS 6-0

Following some initial grip fighting, Gracie Barra talent, Lucas Rocha, pulled guard and started to work from 50/50. Rocha managed to score two points for a sweep, before coming close with a back take.

After a few frantic exchanges Rocha finally reached the back, but Lenon did well to escape the position. Lenon's last gasp leglock attack was in vain, and Rocha progressed to the next round.

JAMES PUOPOLO VS YURI SIMOES

YURI SIMOES WINS 6-2

Reigning nogi world champion, Yuri Simoes, started this match with a great power double leg, picking up a quick two points. After a series of scrambles, including a nice judo throw attempt from Puopolo, Simoes secured a further two points for another double leg takedown.

Puopolo did mount a decent leglock attack, which led to a sweep. However, Yuri quickly swept back and ended the match close to securing four points for back control.

BRUNO BASTOS VS TIM SPRIGGS

The seasoned veteran, Bruno Bastos, had his work cut out when he drew young gun, Tim Spriggs, in the first round. Spriggs was a bundle of energy from the word go and came close to passing Bastos' half guard on a number of occasions.

TIM SPRIGGS WINS BY REFEREE DECISION

Though neither fighter was able to score any points, Spriggs picked up a deserved referee decision for his high-octane guard passing and solid attacking wrestling.

ABRAHAM MARTE VS JOAO ASSIS

JOAO ASSIS WINS VIA HEEL HOOK

Abraham "The God of War" Marte looked pumped at the start of this match and wasted no time in locking up a triangle on the ADCC champion, Joao Assis. However, Assis leant on his years of experience and defended the position extremely well, breaking free around the three minute mark.

Assis' coach, Lucas Leite, asked for a "coach's challenge" once the triangle had been escaped to see if Assis should have scored two points at the beginning of the fight. The challenge failed, so the Checkmat fighter was awarded a penalty.

Having been inside Marte's triangle for half the match, Assis knew he had to act fast – which he did. As soon as Marte pulled guard, Joao sat back and locked up a tight heel hook, which was enough to get the submission.

SEMI FINAL

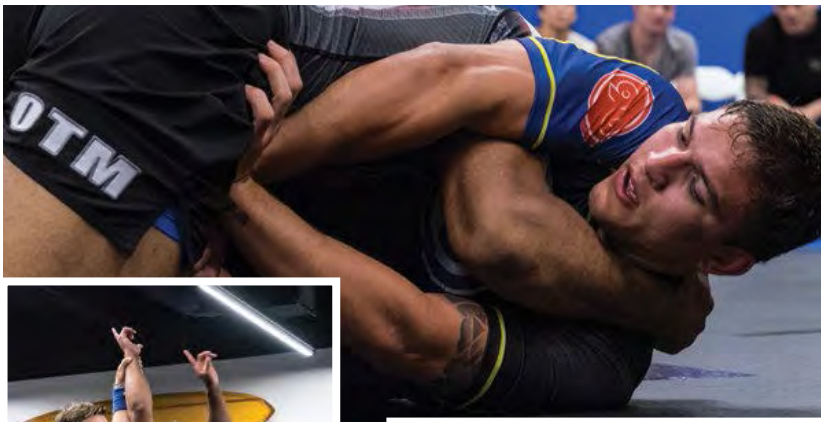
YURI SIMOES VS JOAO ASSIS

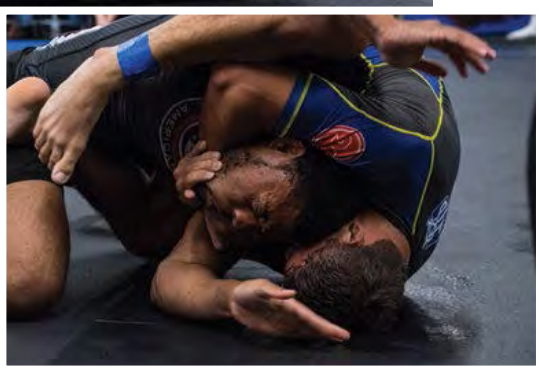
This match was a true showcase of wrestling, with Simoes in particular moving from single leg attacks to front headlocks and almost getting a takedown out of bounds.

SIMOES WINS BY REFEREE DECISION

The highlight of the match saw Simoes come close with a fireman's carry attempt, which Joao countered. Assis then almost reached Yuri's back. Simoes, then working from his back, was active with triangle, armlock and leglock attacks, before they both scrambled back to their feet.

Finally, another great wrestling exchange saw Assis counter Yuri very well. The match ended with Simoes earning a close referee decision.





SEMI FINAL

LUCAS ROCHA VS TIM SPRIGGS

TIM SPRIGGS WINS 5-0

Both athletes came out of the blocks looking to wrestle, with Spriggs perhaps coming closer with his efforts. On the three-minute mark it was the Team Lloyd Irvin fighter that finally got the takedown and two points.

In a fantastic last minute of action, Rocha hit a slick x-guard transition before locking off a calf slicer submission attempt. With 30 seconds left, Rocha abandoned the sub attempt and looked to take the back. He narrowly missed out on the four points and Spriggs ended up on top. With seconds left on the clock, Spriggs also scored a late guard pass.

FINAL

TIM SPRIGGS VS YURI SIMOES

TIM SPRIGGS WINS 2-0

As expected, the final started with both fighters coming out extremely aggressively. In fact, the aggressive hand slap clinching was enough for the referee to award both fighters a penalty.

The first four minutes played out as a wrestling match, with Yuri mixing it up via arm drags and single leg attempts. However, Spriggs upped his intensity hugely in the final two minutes, earning a takedown to go ahead by two points. With 1:20 on the clock to work with, Yuri struggled to mount an attack to level the score and Spriggs went home as the Five Super League Champion and 10k richer to boot.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE FIRST ROUND

NYJAH ROLLINS VS LEANNA DITTRICH

NYJAH ROLLINS WINS VIA REFEREE DECISION

Fight Sports representative, Leanna Dittrich, went straight to work and pulled guard early. Despite her best efforts from reverse de la Riva and sit up positions, Nyjah was applying lots of passing pressure. Neither fighter was able to really stamp their authority on the match, but Rollins got the nod from the referee for her persistent attempts to pass.

KAREN ANTUNES VS LUIZA MONTEIRO

KAREN ANTUNES WINS VIA ARMLOCK

Having only recently been promoted to black belt, and facing off against a reigning world champion, Karen Antunes entered her first round match against Luiza Monteiro as the underdog. However, she obviously hadn't read the script!

Luiza pulled guard early and hit a beautiful sweep, which almost led to a back take before the fighters arrived on their feet. Luiza pulled guard once again, working with a lasso and lapel grip. Antunes was working very hard to pass, but with 1:30 left on the clock, Monteiro secured a second sweep and arrived on top.

In dramatic fashion, Antunes shot a quick triangle, which surprised her opponent. Monteiro worked desperately to escape the tight choke, but Antunes cleverly switched to an armlock for the tap and picked up the shock victory of the tournament.

CHELSEA LEAH VS FABIANA BORGES

FABIANA BORGES WINS 2-0

Gracie Barra's Fabiana Borges pulled half guard early before transitioning to de la Riva/spider control. Atos' new black belt, Chelsea Leah, did very well in avoiding a number of decent sweep attempts with great balance.

Fabiana finally managed to score a sweep from a sit up guard before pushing the pace hard from the top. Borges came close to taking Leah's back, but after a frantic exchange found herself playing from guard. Chelsea's spirited efforts were to no avail, and Fabiana won on points.

TAMMI MUSUMECI VS MACKENZIE DERN

The lady of the moment, Mackenzie Dern, looked to show off her judo early with a foot sweep attempt, which forced Tammi to swiftly pull guard. Musumeci then almost scored a sweep using a berimbolo, but Mackenzie fired her back to the mat before points could be scored.

MACKENZIE DERN WINS VIA COLLAR CHOKE

Dern's pace was relentless, and she forced Tammi to turtle in order to prevent passing points. Mackenzie then transitioned beautifully towards the back and sunk in a deep collar choke, forcing the submission.

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SEMI FINAL

NYJAH ROLLINS VS KAREN ANTUNES

KAREN ANTUNES WINS 3-0

Coming off the back of her impressive victory over Luiza Monteiro, Antunes pulled guard early and looked to attack an armlock, which Nyjah shrugged off fairly easily. Antunes then pushed hard for a sweep from sit up guard, but Rollins did very well to scramble to her feet and avoid the two points.

Rollins pulled guard in the next exchange, and Antunes quickly started her passing game. The Checkmat fighter eventually passed and got the three points with around 30 seconds left on the clock.

SEMI FINAL

MACKENZIE DERN VS FABIANA BORGES

The leggy Borges pulled guard early, looking to utilise her excellent bottom game. Having established a solid sweeping position from spider guard, it looked like Mackenzie would have to concede two points. However, Dern managed to jump on a tight kneebar, forcing the tap and booking her place in the final.

MACKENZIE DERN WINS VIA KNEEBAR

FINAL

MACKENZIE DERN VS KAREN ANTUNES

MACKENZIE DERN WINS VIA TOEHOLD

As expected judging by her first two fights, Mackenzie came flying out the blocks, securing an early omoplata. Though she didn't finish the submission she used it to sweep and arrive on top. From the top position, Mackenzie continued her amazing submission streak and locked up a toehold for the victory.

SUPER FIGHT ONE

KEENAN CORNELIUS VS OTAVIO SOUSA

Both fighters looked adamant in aiming to secure a takedown and started working for superior wrestling positions. The first three minutes were a real feeling out process, with Keenan attacking via a couple of single legs, but not managing to finish the takedowns.

KEENAN CORNELIUS WINS 4-0 IN OVERTIME

Finally, Keenan managed to bundle Otavio to the mat around four minutes in, and Otavio was forced to work from guard. After a few guard pass attempts from Keenan, Otavio made it back to his feet. Having had enough of the wrestling exchanges, Keenan finally sat back to play from the bottom.

After a few more tentative transitions Keenan came back to his feet and hit a power double leg takedown in the last minute of regular time. He then dropped onto a leglock attack, but Otavio scrambled clear.

The match went into overtime and the start of what became another wrestling match, with both fighters aware that points now came into play. Keenan scored two for a takedown after defending an omoplata attempt.

Keenan once again ended up on his back, with Otavio tentatively looking to pass and attempting to sit back on a number of leg locks. Coming into the final minute of the match the pace didn't really heighten and Otavio never really showed enough to worry Cornelius. Another loose heel hook attempt resulted in Keenan coming on top to claim a sweep and the victory.

SUPER FIGHT TWO

GARRY TONON VS JOAO MIYAO

This was perhaps the most hotly anticipated match on the card, with everyone keen to see if in-form Garry Tonon could avenge his previous decision loss to Joao Miyao. The match started with Joao pulling guard and Tonon jumping on a rolling kneebar early, but it was way too loose and Joao started transitioning with a back take. Garry was able to escape, but it was an impressive exchange from both fighters.

GARRY TONON WINS VIA REFEREE DECISION

The fluidity and dynamics of both fighters was a sight to behold, with Garry constantly attacking and Joao constantly on the move. Eventually, Tonon appeared to have a tight inverted heel hook locked on. Joao wasn't fazed, rolled and eventually escaped after both fighters went out of bounds. Garry was disappointed that the referee didn't start them in the same spot, instead choosing to stand them up.

As the match progressed Tonon managed to establish a number of tight looking heel hook positions, but Joao rolled out of all the submission attempts. Both fighters were constantly looking to move and transition as the match headed to overtime.

Tonon scored a quick two points having come up on a double guard pull from the reset for overtime. Both fighters nullified each other's attacks very well, with Joao unable to finish his back takes and Tonon not able to finish with a leglock.

Right at the death, Joao arrived on top and secured two points, levelling the scores on the board as the fight went to a referee's decision. Tonon was clearly the fighter more actively hunting for a submission, which led to his referee decision victory.

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AT THE OFFICE CANTEEN
So, I'M WATCHING UFC AND THESE JIU JITSU GUYS CAME ON
IT WAS TOTALLY LAME. ALL THEY DID WAS HUG ALL THE TIME... SO GAY MAN!
THEY SHOULD TOTALLY BAN IT. I WOULDN'T LET ANOTHER DUDE TOUCH ME LIKE THAT
KICK IT'S ONLY 'GAY' IF THERE IS EYE CONTACT
LATER...
WTF DUDE!!

JIU JITSU STYLE IS A MAGAZINE FOR YOU, THE BJJ COMMUNITY, SO WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS! WHETHER YOU'RE OFFERING FEEDBACK, OR SHARING A POINT OF VIEW ON TOPICAL EVENTS, CONTACT US VIA: **U2US@BJJSTYLE.COM**

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